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PRESERVATIVE

AGAINST

SOCINIANISM.

THE FOURTH PART.

PRESTYVATIVE

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SOCIALISM.

THE FOURTH PART.

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PRESERVATIVE
AGAINST
SOCINIANISM:
SHEWING

The Falshood and Impiety of that pernicious Opinion advanced by *Socinus* and his Followers, viz. That Reason is to be the Great Rule of our Faith, and the Supreme Judge of Revealed Religion.

THE FOURTH AND LAST PART.

By *JONATHAN EDWARDS* D. D.
And Chaplain in Ordinary to the QUEEN.



O X O N.

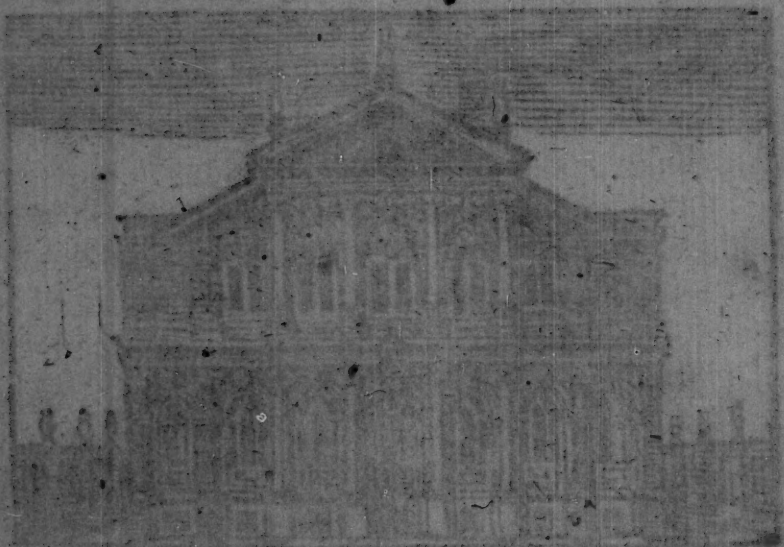
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PRESERVATIVE AGAINST SOCIETARIANISM

ADVERTISEMENT.

You are desired to correct these few Errata's with your pen.

Pag 54. l. 19. read in the faculty of *Astronomy*. p. 51. l. 20. dele is self. p. 182. l. 12.
 read internal for external. p. 188. l. 6. read non pariter accipi, vel rari. p. 217. l. 15. read and
 the *Antient* Christian Doctors of the Church.



O X O N

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PRESERVATIVE

A G A I N S T

Socinianism.

AMONG the various methods made use of by *Socinus* and his Followers, for the destruction of all *Revealed* and particularly the *Christian Religion*, which seems to have been their principal aim; none have been more plausible, nor which they have found more successful, than those two, which I mentioned in my last discourse, by which they do not so much *directly oppose*, as *slightly*, but very dishonestly *undermine* the truth and certainty of it, which yet openly they pretend to acknowledge.

The first is that pernicious principle laid down by them, that all Religion consists in the practice of Piety and a Holy life. By which method they have excluded *Faith* out of their new Schemes of Divinity, which if their position be true, must really be an useless, insignificant, or at best but a very indifferent matter.

The consequence of which will be, either 1st, that men will be induced to embrace this *new Divinity*, which furnishes them with every thing that is useful, and truly desirable in Religion; and at the same time frees them from the difficult task of believing certain *sublime and incomprehensible doctrines*, which

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serve only to puzzle and perplex the understanding; but do not, as they say, tend to promote virtue and piety, which is the only end of all Religion.

Or 2^{dly}, If it hath not this effect, it will help to procure them another, and that no small advantage, *viz.* That men may hereby be prevailed upon to *excuse and extenuate* those errors which these men labour to introduce; even those which otherwise we should not think favourably of, as striking at the *foundation* of our Religion; which yet upon this account will be so far from being esteemed and opposed as *hurtful and pernicious*, that they will rather be accounted very *harmless and pardonable mistakes*.

For when upon perusal of their writings, their Readers will find that they are filled with Exhortations to Piety, which they recommend with great vehemency, and a seeming sincerity; they will hereby, be very easily and naturally diverted from searching into the danger and malignity of their other impious opinions; which when they are stripped of that cover of holiness and piety, by which they are both concealed and adorned at the same time; they will appear like *Sathan disrobed of his rayment of Light*, sufficiently frightful and deformed, and able to strike any sincere Christian with a just horror and amazement. In short, 'tis an easy and a natural inference that every body will be apt to make, that if the great and principal design of Religion be secured, as it may be (if this supposition be true,) by the practice of *Piety*, without the belief of *articles* and *mysteries*; that then our great care should be employed to provide for the former, and let the latter shift as well as they can for themselves; and if they miscarry for want of endeavor and zeal to preserve them, the loss will not be so considerable, as that any man should trouble his own head, or disturb the rest and quiet of his neighbour about them. But of this I have spoken sufficiently in my last discourse, so that I need not now repeat, what I have there insisted on at large.

The 2^d Method (which, I now come particularly, and with Gods leave fully to consider,) made use of by them to this blessed

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blest purpose, is by advancing *Reason above Revelation*, which they make both the *Rule and Judge* of all opinions and doctrines in Religion. And hereby they notably gratify the *vanity and pride of men*, who are naturally fond of liberty, and by consequence uneasy under any restraints; and perhaps none are more irksome then those which are put upon the understanding. Upon which score it is no wonder to find men generally struggling to recover this freedom, which they are so desirous of, that they will stick at no pains, nor decline any hazard to purchase it. And as this discovers it self in all those speculations about which the mind is imployed, so more especially it is seen in the affairs of Religion, in which men now pretend to a more then ordinary *latitude and liberty*, a liberty to think and believe as they please, to reject or receive whatever their reason (with which pride, passion, humor, phancy and interest often mingle themselves, and are thereby comprehended under this name) shall prescribe to them, without direction or controul from any superior power.

This freedom they claim as their *common birthright and inheritance*, which for that reason is stiled, by a position well known and that passes for current in this Age, the *fundamental and unalienable* right of mankind. And if so, I confess 'tis great pity that any should be denyed the benefit of claiming so just and valuable a privilege, or disturbed in the possession of it.

But if we look into the Scripture, which is the *great Charter* of our sacred rights, I am apt to think that we shall find no such privilege entailed upon us. For tho our blest Savior, by his coming into the world, hath among other blessings purchased for us an exemption from the arbitrary and imperious commands of men, who can exercise no dominion directly over our *understandings and consciences*, forasmuch as they are not *Lords and Masters* of our Faith; yet he hath not deprived or de vested himself of that power which he, as *Lord* of all our facultys, hath a right to exercise; even over the *Mind and Conscience*, and all the most exalted thoughts and imaginations of the Soul, which must all stoop and bend to his authority, and be subject to his commands. And therefore to secure his own right,

and our submission, he began to plant his Religion with the Preaching of *Selfdenyal*, which was the great foundation upon which he was afterwards to erect his Kingdom in the hearts and minds of his Disciples.

I know this is a doctrine irksome to our corrupt nature, and therefore it is no wonder that men should be uneasy under it, and by consequence should struggle to recover a pleasing, tho fatal and mischievous liberty; and in order thereunto endeavor to shake of *the yoke*, which Christ hath put upon their necks. We find it so in all the facultys of the Soul: the *will and affections* are uneasy under the restraints of virtue and holyness; which sometimes grow so furious, that they break thro all opposition; so that when they are in an uproar, neither the *commands of reason*, nor the *voice of God* can calm and quiet them; nay rather, the greater opposition they meet with, the more headstrong and outrageous they grow, and bear down every thing that they meet with in their way.

The like pride and stiffness is to be found in the *understanding*, which will as little stoop and submit to the commands and impositions of any superior, as any of the other powers of the Soul: nay the more you depress this faculty, the higher it rises; lifting and exalting it self against every thing that would limit and controul it, even all that is most sacred and divine; even against God himself, and his blessed spirit, all whose revelations must stoop and truckle to it.

And of this we have instances, in all Ages of the Church, in men who for want of that *humility* of mind which the Gospel especially requires, have endeavoured by various methods to get rid of those restraints, which the word of God lays upon them; which both limits their speculations to *certain* objects, forbidding too curious a search after *secret things* which belong unto God, and are placed out of the reach of human knowledge; and requiring their assent to some others, which their own enquiries could never discover, nor after they are discovered can their reason comprehend. This they think too great an usurpation upon the dignity and prerogative of their understanding, which claims to it self an exorbitant and boundless

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less liberty both as to the objects of knowledg, and the power, with which it pretends to be invested of receiving or rejecting them, as they agree, or as they are found repugnant to its own notions and ideas.

In short, hereby they think their understandings too much straitened, and fettered, and therefore in order to recover their liberty, they have made several desperate attempts upon the Scriptures, in which are contain'd so many discoveries of important *mysterious* truths, and so many declarations of the necessity of believing them, both which are judged repugnant to this *liberty*. Some totally rejecting their *authority*, and disowning their *Inspiration*. Others, who have not arrived to that pitch of infidelity, or at least do not think it advisable publicly to own it, yet have used all their endeavors to render these writings as serviceable to their own purposes as they could.

In order to which, some have *counterfited new portions of Scripture*, which they have published under the venerable names of the Apostles and other inspired writers: others have Sacrilegiously corrupted the words and letter of *the old*: and a third sort who durst not make so bold with the words, yet by *false glosses and interpretations*, have endeavored to pervert the true sence and meaning of them. The two former of these methods was practised by the Antient, the latter chiefly made use of by our modern Hereticks: but both the ancient and modern practice, is in great measure owing to that pride and obstinacy before mentioned, which will not permit men to submit their reason to the *Revelations* which God hath made in his *word*; but the *word* must stoop and bend to their *reasons*, and all ways must be used to bring the Scriptures to give countenance to their opinions and notions, which they make the rule by which they would finally judge of the truth and falshood of all Doctrines. And whatever doth not agree with this rule, they think they may warrantably reject, as they do, with the utmost scorn and contempt, those *mysterys* of our holy Faith, which we own, as the Christian Church allways hath done, to be sublime and transcendent Doctrines, surpassing the understanding and comprehensions of men.

Upon

Upon this Head, *Socinus* and his followers down to the Age we live in, have all along enlarged with great copiousness and vehemence, displaying upon this occasion all their stores of wit and eloquence, which yet may soon be exhausted; together with those *inexhaustible treasures* of malice, virulence and scurrility, with which the writings of these great pretenders to meekness and moderation, upon this subject every where abound.

Now in the charge which these men draw up against our holy Religion, upon the account of the *mysteries of our Faith*, and their seeming *repugnance to reason*, we must know that they have but transcribed the Copy which their Forefathers in Infidelity, I mean the ancient *Pagans and Hereticks*, have set them. And the same answer which the Fathers of old, who were engaged in the defence of our common Faith gave them, will serve our purpose in the disputes which we have with our *modern Infidels*.

Now what the *Pagans* of old objected against Christianity was, that it consisted chiefly in *believing*, that it was ἀναγινώσκουσα ἀναμάρτητος, an Institution which was devoid of proof and demonstration, rather compelling then convincing men, and commanding their assent without assigning a reason for it. Thus by *Celsus*¹ our persuasion of divine truths is styled πίστις ἄλογος ἢ ἀλογος, a naked irrational Faith; and the Greeks, as *Clemens*² of *Alexandria* tells us, reproached it upon that score as an empty and therefore a brutish assent; κενὴ καὶ βάρβαρον νομίζαντες, which for that reason they rejected with the greatest contempt and disdain.

And indeed this proved one of the greatest obstructions to the entertainment of Christianity among the *Philosophers* and wise men, as they would be accounted, especially the *Greeks*, who sought after wisdom, 1 Cor. i. 22. and would entertain nothing, but what came cloathed forsooth, with *light and demonstration*; which they not finding in our holy Religion, they despised it as a weak, foolish, absurd institution, calculated only for

¹ Orig. Con. Cels. p. 32.

² Strom. Lib. 2. p. 362.

mean, ignorant, illiterate persons; not for the wise, the learned, the noble, men of elevated thoughts, and a generous education; who were not thus easily to be imposed upon, nor would tamely suffer themselves to be oppressed with the weight of authority.

The like suggestions are offered by our *modern Scepticks*: God hath given us, say they, certain faculties, whereby we are distinguished and advanced above other inferior animals; and he hath given them us for this purpose, that we should make use of them, and thereby be directed in our enquiries after truth and falsehood: it becomes us therefore to assert the privilege of our natures, and the preeminence of our understandings; and not like beasts of burthen, submit to any loads or impositions, which designing men may imperiously lay upon us: for no *authority* can be great enough to *force our assent*, which ought only to be determined by *evidence and a clear conviction*: Religion without reason is a senseless institution and downright Popery.

Few men are thus willing to be argued out of their senses: as for instance, because in some cases we may form a wrong judgment of certain objects presented to our view, and upon that score may be lyable to mistakes; that therefore we should pluck our eyes out of our heads, and put them into our pockets; or where they will be equally useless, into the hands and custody of others, and then resign our selves blindfold to their guidance and direction.

It must be an argument of much greater stupidity in us, if we should not make use of those nobler faculties which God hath bestowed upon us; but suffer others to hoodwink our understanding; and then tamely and foolishly submit to their management and conduct. For hereby we become *unthankful to God*, by despising or neglecting that great and never sufficiently to be valued blessing which he hath bestowed upon us: and at the same time we become *extremely injurious* to our selves: for when we have once parted with that certain and brighter light which God hath afforded us for our direction; our reason, I mean, which is that *Candle*
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of the Lord, which he hath set up in the Soul, and shines with so steady and even a flame; then those crafty and designing men, who have prevailed with us to do so, may lead us into endless errors and mistakes. For when men have once parted with their eyes, they are then fit to be lead by the nose, and whether they may be lead, as they have not knowledg to foresee, so neither is it in their power to prevent.

By these methods the Doctrines of the Trinity and Transubstantiation, (which our Adversaries allways joyn together) have been, as they say, introduced into the Church by Antichrist; and which if we believe them, are equally monstrous and absurd. Now the answer which of old was given by the Fathers to those objections raised by the *Pagans* against Christianity, will serve our turn against the Cavils of our modern *Infidels*.

And first they tell their Adversaries, when charged by them with contenting themselves with a *naked brutish assent*, not supported by any good reason; and that they required their disciples only to *believe*, but not to enquire into the *grounds and principles* of their Faith; I say, they tell their Adversaries, that this was all calumny and falshood: for no Religion ever exposed it self to a *fairer tryal*, inviting and encourageing men to an equal and discreet examination thereof. It doth not require a *hasty and precipitate assent*, but puts men upon enquiring, whether the Doctrines proposed to their belief are really what is pretended, *viz.* certain and divine truths or no.

In this sense, Faith is every where defined by the Fathers to be *ἡ ἐκ τῆς θεωρίας, ἐκαστοῦ συγκατάθεσις*, and *ἐκαστοῦ πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν*, a habit that inclines us to assent to divine truths upon mature, thought and deliberation, and is not founded in ignorance and rashness, haste and inconsideration, but is the product of reason and choyce.

We are not therefore to be borne down by *bare authority*,

or the arbitrary and imperious commands of Superiors in the affairs of Religion, without *tryal and examination*, nor compelled by *any force* but that of *reason*. Upon this account we are frequently exhorted in Scripture, *to prove and examine all things. To try the spirits whether they are of God.* And by St. Peter, *To be ready allways to give an answer to every man that asketh of us a reason of the hope, or faith that is in us.*

In pursuance of these Exhortations, the *Fathers* join πίστις and γνώσις, faith and knowledg together, as being both reciprocal causes, and mutual supports to each other; and reject ἄλογον πίστιν, as a great disparagement to the Christian Religion, which is admirably contrived to improve, *heighten and ennoble* our faculties, but by no means designed to *dishonour and debase* them. For if we observe its directions, and comply with its precepts, it will advance us to an *equality* or likeness with the blessed Angels: nay, which is the greatest honour that a Creature is capable of, it will render us *like God*, and in some sense *partakers of the divine nature*. It must be then a great disparagement to our holy Religion, to think that it hath any tendency to *destroy reason*, and thereby to

I Οὐτε ἡ γνώσις ἀντὶ πίστεως, ἢ ἡ πίστις ἀντὶ γνώσεως. Clem. Alex. Lib. 5. Strom. p. 544. πίστις συντόμιος ἐστὶ τῶν κατεπειγόντων γνώσις. ἡ γνώσις δὲ ἀποδείξις τῶν ἀπὸ πίστεως παρεκκεχυμένων ἰσχυρὰ καὶ βέβαια, &c. Id. Strom. 7. p. 732. *plura in hanc sententiam videre est apud alios patres, præsertim Theod. The- rapeut. 1.*

2 Λέγω δὴ πῶς καὶ τὸ σωτῆρα Χριστὸν πίστιν, ἵνα μὴ τε εὐτελεῖ τις τὸ καθ' ἡμᾶς λόγῳ διδασκαλίαν ἠγνοῖται, μήτε ἄλογον τὸ εἰς Χριστὸν πίστιν ὑπολάβῃ. Athan. Orat. contra Græcos. A new Heresie sprung up in his time, it seems, which taught men to believe ἀπλῶς & ἀλόγως, without Enquiry or Examination into the truth of the things proposed to their faith; Against this he published a small Discourse, in which, with great vehemence and a becoming indignation, he refutes this absurd and Enthusiastical notion of faith, which these Hereticks defin'd to be ἀβασάνιστος ὅτι τοῖς ἀσάτοις καὶ ἀναποδείκτοις συγκατάδεσσις. To which he replys with a just warmth: What, must I believe without Judgement, and without Enquiry? ἀλόγως πιστεύω; καὶ μὴ ἐξετάσω τὸ δυνατόν, ἢ συμφέρον, ἢ ἁρεπτόν, ἢ Θεοῦ φίλον, ἢ τῇ φύσει κατὰ λόγον, ἢ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ σύμφωνον, ἢ τῇ σκοπῇ ἀκόλυτον, ἢ τῇ μυσταίᾳ ἀρμόδιον, ἢ τὸ οὐσι- νῆαι ἄξιον. Oper. Tom. 2. p. 325.

put us upon the same level with the brute Beasts, who have neither *knowledge* to direct, nor *freedom* to govern their own actions, and therefore must be subject to the power, and managed at the pleasure and by the commands of others.

But then on the other hand, it must not be denyed, but that the Ancients did sometimes plainly distinguish between *Faith* and *Knowledge*. So they did in their disputes with the *Gnosticks* and *Valentinians*, who despised the Orthodox upon the account of their ignorance and credulity, as they would have it accounted, and boasted of their own attainments; ἡ τὴν μὲν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἀπλοῖς ἀπινέμαντες ἡμῖν, αὐτοῖς δὲ τὴν γινῶσιν: we poor simple Christians must be content with Faith; whilst they pretending to knowledge, and exalted speculations, assumed to themselves the high and vain-glorious title of *Gnosticks*.

So *Aetius* and *Eunomius* of old boasted that they perfectly knew God, and could comprehend all his perfections as easily and fully, as they could and did their own. Now in opposition to the impious boasts and pretences of these vain men, the *Fathers* on the contrary affirmed, that *Faith* was not an assent to truths *clear* and *evident* in their own nature, but to things *not seen*, *not known*, *not comprehended*: that it was as the Apostle defined it, 11 chap. Heb. v. 1. ἑλεγχος πραγμάτων ἔκλεπμένων, the evidence of things not seen: ἀφανὲς ἡ πρᾶγματος συγκατάθεσις. And therefore by *St. Basil* it is opposed to ἀποδείξις, demonstration, because Faith induces the mind to assent to divine truths, ὑπερ τῆς λογικῆς μεθόδου, not by conclusions and deductions of natural reason, but by authority and re-

1 Clem. Alexandr. Strom. Lib. 2. p. 363.

2 Οὕτως ἢ Θεὸν δῆσαμαι τηλαυγέστατα, καὶ ποσῶτον αὐτὸν δῆσαμαι καὶ οἶδα, ὥστε μὴ εἶδέναι ἑμαυτὸν ὡς Θεὸν μᾶλλον δῆσαμαι. Aetius apud Epiph. Her. 76. pag. 390. De eod. Theod. Heret. fab. Lib. 4. cap. 3. ἐπέλυσεν εἰπεῖν, ὡς εἶδεν τῶν δείων ἡγρόμεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸν ἀλέκτως δῆσαται ἢ Θεὸς ἢ εἶσαν, καὶ ἢ αὐτὸν ᾧ καὶ Θεὸς ἔχει γινῶσιν, ἢ αὐτὸς ἔχει ᾧ εἰσαυτὸς ὁ Θεός. Vide Greg. Nyss. contra Eunomium Orat. 12.

3 Clem. Alexandr. Strom. Lib. 2. pag. 362.

4 Basil. in Psal. 115. ad ver. 1.

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velation: and by St. *Chrysostom* to λογισμὸς, to ratiocination, which he very often, and very earnestly dehorts his hearers from, as that which would be very hurtful and pernicious to the affairs of Religion. Because Faith assents to such Doctrines which reason, tho never so much hightned or improved with Philosophy, could neither discover nor comprehend.

Now these things at first view may seem inconsistent, but yet upon due enquiry they will be found very well to agree: and the explication of these seeming contrarieties will give us a clear and full state of this matter, viz. how far reason may act in conjunction with faith; and in what cases faith totally excludes it.

First therefore with relation to *Revealed*, and particularly the *Christian Religion*, (of which I am now speaking) as far as concerns the *Institution* it self, and the main and *fundamental principles* of it; such as are for instance; that Jesus was the Messiah, the son of God: that the message which he brought, and the doctrine which he taught, was from God: that the Scriptures are the word of God, and contain a revelation of his mind and will, which he hath published to the world by certain holy and inspired writers, who spoke and wrote as they were directed by the Holy Ghost. I say with relation to these fundamental principles of our Religion, there is roome for proof, conviction and demonstration. And such full and clear proof hath been given of these matters, in all ages ever since Christianity was first planted in the world, as hath prevailed against all the force and power, all the learning and eloquence, and which is more, hath triumphed over all the malice, pride, and obstinacy of a refractory and contradicting world.

Our blessed Saviour himself did not exact Faith and submis-

† Ταυτ' ἐν εἰδότες, μὴ λογισμῷ τὰ περὶ Θεοῦ ζητῶμεν, μὴδὲ ὑπὸ τῆ ἀκαλεσίαν τῆ παρ' ἡμῶν ἀγωγῆς τὰ ἐκείθεν, μὴδὲ ἀνάγκη φύσεως ὑπο-ἀλλ' ὡμῶν, ἀλλ' εὐσεβῶς πάντα νοῶμεν, πιστεύοντες ὡς εἶπον αἱ γραφαί. *Chrysost. Hom. 24. in Joh. cap. 3.* εἶδ' ὅτι ὅπως ποιεῖ σκότοδιον ὡς ἀνθρώπων λογισμὸς ὑπὸ τῆ γῆς πάντα φθγγρόμενος, καὶ μὴ ἀνεχόμενος φωτίζεσθαι ἀνωθεν. πολλῶν γὰρ ἔχει τὸ ἰλὺν τὸ μῶδες τῶν λογισμῶν. *Id. ibid.*

sion from his hearers *imperiously* and *dogmatically*, without good reason and conviction. For he proves the truth of his doctrine and mission, by such arguments as were the clearest, strongest and most convincing in the world. Such as were the writings of the Prophets, who were acknowledged to be divinely inspired by the Jews, and therefore to them their testimony was beyond all exception.

Upon this account he bids them *search the Scriptures*, which they themselves owned, and not take things barely upon his word. He appeals to the witness of God himself, who by a voice from Heaven, more than once, owned him to be his *well beloved Son*, whom he sent into the world on purpose to instruct men in their duty, and to inform them of all things that were fit for them to know and practice in order to obtain eternal life. For which undertaking he was admirably qualified, as having *bin in the bosome of his Father*, and thereby was perfectly and thoroughly acquainted with his will and pleasure, and intimately conscious to all, even his most secret purposes and designs. Lastly to the *miracles* which he wrought by his own Almighty power, as the great and irrefragable confirmation of the truth of his doctrine.

His *Apostles* afterwards took the same course, convincing the Jews, and confounding their obstinacy, by proofs which they took out of the writings of the *Old Testament*; and by the power of the same spirit which rested upon their Lord, and was afterwards communicated to them, they were enabled to work miracles likewise, which are stiled the *demonstration of the Spirit*: and a more powerful one it was, then any the most clear and cogent arguments which could be found out or urged by *natural reason*, though hightened and ennobled with all the sublimest precepts of *Philosophy*. For hereby they baffled the objections, and confounded the wisdom of all the wisest Statesmen and most profound Philosophers; and their Religion prevailed over the cunning and sophistry, wit and policy, learning and eloquence, which these men made use of to oppose it; all which were forced at length to submit and stoop to the arguments and authority of the Gospel.

Nay they did not only stop the mouths, and vanquish the cavils of these gainfayers, but they likewise *struck the Devils dumb and silenced their Oracles*: not only dislodging them out of the bodys and minds of men, of which they had for many ages taken an entire possession, and where they governed with an absolute sway: but forced them also out of their *Vaults and Caverns, Tripods and Temples*; from whence they parted, groaning and howling, and complaining of some secret, but allmighty force, against which they found it in vain to struggle or make any resistance.

And if we are now asked what proofs we can give of the truth of our Religion, we are ready to produce such arguments as are sufficient to convince any, who are not before hand resolved to withstand all conviction. For here we are content to appeal to the understandings of men, and to argue with them, as the phrase is, upon the *plain square of reason*, which we are desirous should be umpire in the case. For we have the same proofs and arguments which *our Savior* and his *Apostles* insisted upon, whereby they not only subdued the force, and vanquished the contradictions and blasphemies of men, but triumphed likewise over all the powers of *darkness and Hell*. Such proofs we can produce for the truth and certainty of the *Christian Faith*, that if men will reject them, they must likewise reject all Religion, shake off the belief of *a God* and a *providence*; and at the same time lay the foundations of *Scepticisme* and doubting, not only in Religion, but in the affairs of civil life likewise, and bring all things into disorder and confusion in the world.

For there can be no truth in History, no credit to be given to any Records, no confidence in men, no quiet or assurance in our own minds, if these reasons which we offer in proof of our Religion be not true: but doubting and uncertainty must, as I said before, be introduced into the affairs relating to this life, as well as of that which is to come: and a mutual distrust, jealousy and suspicion among men must universally prevail. All which might easily be made to appear, if it were the business of this present discourse.

But

Nay

But *2dly*, When after due tryal and examination men are convinced of the truth of the *Christian Religion* in general, and that the *Scriptures* in which it is contained are the *word of God*, then we are obliged to yield a full assent to all its particular Doctrines without any scruple or hesitation, tho they are never so much above the reach and comprehension of our reason. It is true, we may, nay we must *examine the Scriptures*, and search and see whether those Doctrines which we style *mysteries*, are revealed there: and when upon due search and tryal we have found them, then we have no more to do but to yield a firm and entire assent, without exception to any of those truths, how *sublime or incomprehensible* soever they may be.

And with reference to these particular Doctrines of the Christian Religion, the Fathers still oppose *Faith* to *knowledge* and *demonstration*: because these truths are above the reach of our understanding, I mean fully to comprehend them; and are not capable of being demonstrated otherwise then by *Scripture*: the grounds of our *belief* and *persuasion* in this case, being not founded in the evidence of the things themselves, or in any agreement which may be discovered between them and our natural Ideas, but in divine Revelation. And therefore in this case we must believe, *καὶ ἡ φύσις μάχηται*, to use St. *Basil's* words upon this occasion, tho nature startles, and our understandings are staggered at the mention and discovery of them. And in this sense, those holy and wise men before mentioned, who required *tryal* and *examination* in the affairs of

1 Διὰ τὸτο καὶ ὁ ἀπόστολος παρακαλεῖ, ἵνα ἡ πίστις ἡμῶν μὴ ᾖ ἐν σοφίᾳ ἀνθρώπων τῶν κείθεν ἐπαγγελλομένων, ἀλλ' ἐν δυνάμει Θεοῦ, τῇ μόνῃ καὶ ἀνδρῶν τῶν ἀποδείξων, διὰ φιλοῦς τῆ πίστεως σώζον δυνάμει. Clem. Alex. Strom. Lib. 5. p. 549. Πίστις ἡγεῖται τῶν σοφῶν Θεοῦ λόγων. πίστις καὶ μὴ ἀποδείξις. πίστις ἡ ὑπὲρ τὰς λογικὰς μεθόδους τῆ ψυχῆ εἰς συγκράτησιν ἔλκεται. Basil. in Psal. 115. ver. 1.

2 Basil. Mor. Reg. 80. Ὅτι εἰ δεῖ ἀφαιρῖναι καὶ διαλέγειν ὑπὸ τῆς Κυρίου λεγομένης, ἀλλὰ πληροφορεῖται πᾶν ἔθνος Θεοῦ ἀληθὲς εἶναι καὶ δυνατὸν, καὶ ἡ φύσις μάχηται ἐνταῦθα καὶ ὁ ἀνὴρ τῆ πίστεως.

3 Thus Clemens of Alexandria frequently advizes to Search, Enquire, Examine, before we believe. Τὼ πιστὶν τοίνυν ἐκ ἀργῶν καὶ μόνων, ἀλλὰ σὺ ζητήσῃ

of Religion; exhorting their Disciples to make use of their reason, and not to be imposed upon, by any the most specious pretences, without full proof and clear evidence, as far as the nature of the thing to be believed would admit: yet when they speak of the particular *mysteries of Faith*, there they forbid all curious search and enquiry; they require ἀπαλυπταγμένον συγκάταξιν, an assent which excludes all bold and pragmatistical questions about things placed above the reach of reason; which besides the *presumption and folly* of them, are extremely *pernicious*, as being directly opposite to that submission and obedience, which is due to the truth and authority of divine Revelation.

And therefore in this case, they require their Disciples again and again, with great concern and vehemence, to *submit*, and not to *dispute*; to *believe*, and not to *argue*; καὶ ἡ φύσις, as we said before, and we may add, καὶ ἡ γνώσις, καὶ ἡ ἀποδείξις, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἡ λογισμὸς μάχεται; tho nature recoyls, reason resists, demonstration raises cavils and objections, and the understanding is nonplus'd, and as it were swallowed up in the contemplation of these *mysteries*. Now this is fair dealing, a just and

τήτοι δὲ ὡς φαίνεται φανερὸν. ὅτι τὸ αὐτὸ λέγω, μετ' ὅλων ζητεῖν. Ζητεῖ γὰρ καὶ εὐρήσεις λέγει. Luc. 11. ver. 9. Strom. Lib. 5. p. 550. Οἱ γὰρ ζητῶντες καὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐμπαυδιῶσονται τὴν δύσιν καὶ τὴν πύξιν. Θεὸς, ὅτετι, τὴν γνώσιν. Δὲ ζήσεται ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτῶν. ibid. But then to make our Enquiries successful, in order to find out the truth, he adds good advice; that we should lay aside all Pride, Envy, Contention and Perverseness, which are the great obstacles and impediments of it. Ἀλλὰ τὸ μὴ διωρατικὸν τὴν ψυχῆς ἀποτρέπειν πρὸς τὴν εὐρίαν χρόν, καὶ τὰ ἐμποδὼν ἀφαιρῶν; φιλονεικίαν τε αὐτὴν καὶ φθόνον, καὶ τὴν ἐναντιωτικὴν καὶ ἀντιπρῶτων ἐλομύλιν ἀποτρέφειν. ibid. vid. Euseb. de Præpar. Evang. Lib. 1. cap. 3.

2. Τῶν αὐτῶν ἡ πίστις δέεται ἐκ πολυπραγμοσύνης; καὶ ὅταν Θεὸς ἐπιτάτῃ, πείθεσθαι ἐκπειράζοντες. Chrysost. Hom. 27. in Epist. ad Rom. ὅτι Θεὸς ἀντιπρῶτος, ἀλλὰ πείθειν καὶ ὑπακούειν. ὑπακούει γὰρ ἡ πίστις δέεται, ἐκ πολυπραγμοσύνης. Theoph. in cap. 16. Epist. ad Rom. ver. 26. ὅτι καὶ λογισμοῖς ἰδίῳις σφείζοντες ὅτι ἀδελφῶν τῶν ὑπὸ τῷ Κυρίῳ λεγομένων. ἀξιωματικὰ δὲ οἰδεῖναι τὴν ἰδίαν περισφορίαν τὰ τῷ Κυρίῳ ἔχματα. St. Basil. Mor. Reg. 8. cap. 3. Εἰ γὰρ μέλλοιμεν πάντα τῇ καταλήξει μετῆναι, καὶ τὸ τοῖς λογισμοῖς ἀπελάττον μὴδὲ εἶναι τὸ ὁρθῶς ὑπολαμβάνειν, οἰχίσεται καὶ ἡ πίστις, οἰχίσεται ὁ καὶ ἐλπίδος μισθός. Id. adver. Eunom. Lib. 2. p. 65.

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equal method of proceeding, exacting no more then what right reason will allow, and indeed require men to give.

For should a person come and bring some strange and new Doctrine to our ears, such as is either contrary to the common and received Principles, which we have derived from *Education, Instruction, Observation, &c.* and much more if it surpasses all *humane comprehension*; I may, nay if I will act prudently, I must in this case require of him some good proof, why I should submit my understanding to his declarations. If he cannot assure me of the truth of them by such reasons and arguments, as are drawn from the *nature of the Doctrines* themselves; I will demand of him, which is but reasonable, that he should make it out, that he is a *messenger sent from God*, employed and empowered by him, to inform and instruct the world of that which otherwise they could never discover nor apprehend. And if he can clearly convince me of this, I have no more to do but to submit, and to receive his message with all that reverence that is due to the *authority of God*, in whose name he speaks.

The summe of what hath been said is this. First, That before we give our assent to any truths, even in Religion, we ought to have some warrantable and authentick *reason* for so doing; otherwise it will be an *irrational* and therefore an *unjustifiable Faith*; forasmuch as thereby we shall act unsuitably to the dignity of our nature, which in its choyce and perswasions, ought to be determined and swayed, not by *force* and *external impulse*, but by such *motives* and *arguments* as are proper to work upon creatures endued with freedom and knowledg.

Neither will it be enough in this case, barely to have reasons and arguments suggested to us, but we must *weigh and ponder* the grounds of things: not yielding too *hasty and precipitate* an assent, which ought to be the effect of *choice and deliberation*. And the more of our time and thoughts that we employ in this search, the more commendable will our Faith be. Especially if we consider the importance of the subject about which it is conversant, *viz.* our *holy Religion*, in which the *honour of God*, and our own *Salvation* is so

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nearly concerned. But this enquiry is to be employed chiefly about the *external grounds and motives* of our assent, and particularly, that divine and *supernatural testimony*, into which our Faith is ultimately to be resolved.

But this is not all: for after we are fully and clearly satisfied of the truth of the Revelation, which is the principal ground of our Faith, then we are *2dly*, farther to employ our reason in finding out the just *sense and meaning* of it; and to make use of all proper methods for our better information in this particular. Such as are to enquire into the *signification and construction* of the words. To consider the *circumstances and context*, and the relation which the words may bear to any of the other passages, which go before or come after. To enquire into the *scope and design* of the Author: comparing likewise particular passages with other Texts and parts of Scripture, betwixt which there is allways a certain *harmony and agreement*, tho there may sometimes at first view, appear a kind of *diversity*: that is, as the Apostle speaks, to *compare Spiritual things with Spiritual*, which help wonderfully to illustrate and confirm each other.

Now here there is room for the exercise of our reason, but still regulated by the Revelation; room I say to *Consider*, to *Examine*, to *Compare*, to *Argue*, to make just *Consequences and Deductions*, which *inferences* when rightly made, are *Scripture*, as much as the *express words and letter* of it. And in all this reason doth not exceed its just bounds and limits; and within these limits, we pay a juster deference to reason than all the adversaries of our holy Faith, whether ancient or modern do, or have done, notwithstanding all their lowd boasts, and impudent pretences to the contrary, as may hereafter be shewen.

Lastly, when we have proceeded thus far, reason hath done all that is fitting, and that lies within her sphere and compass, and must proceed no farther. For after that I am once thoroughly convinced of the *truth* of the *Revelation*, and sufficiently instructed in the *sense and meaning* of it; then I must not curiously enquire into the *nature* of those particular *Doctrines* thus revealed, and thus explained, and bring them to

the Tribunal of my understanding, and there sit, examine and censure them by my own Ideas and Conceptions of things. For let these truths be never so much *above*, or never so *contrary* to those *received notions* whereby I judge of ordinary and common objects; yet I am bound to give my assent: because this is nothing else but to acknowledge the *veracity of God*, and to own his *authority*, to which every thing should stoop and bow: not only the *Knee*, but the *Head* must bend, tho' at other times we may be apt to bear it never so high. Nay the *νοῦς*, the highest and supreme faculty of the Soul, though it may exalt it self above all that is *humane*, yet must be content to yield and stoop to him who is *the Lord of all our Faculties*, who made both the *eye to see*, and hath given us *reason to consider*, and without whose continual assistance and blessing, those very powers would loose all their force and efficacy, and be rendered useless and insignificant. Nay, instead of directing us into the right way, for which end they were first given us, they would lead us into endless errors and mistakes; and *the light within us would be turned into utter darkness*.

It is but highly reasonable then, that I should give my assent to such truths, as God hath thus revealed, without any further tryal and examination: and to doe otherwise will be absurd and unphilosophical. In all *Sciences* there are certain principles or *postulata*, which are never proved but taken for granted; otherwise we should not know where to begin our instructions, nor consequently could the foundations of knowledge be layd with any certainty, but there would be room left for perpetual doubting, and endless cavils. It is true, there is a *Subordination* in Sciences, and what is taken for a *Principle* in one, may be *proved* by another. But however, the *Principles* as such, in every science, are *primo cognita*, first known, and therefore not capable of being proved *there*. Because all proof being made *à notiori*, these principles being in that Science, *prima*, and *primo cognita*; the truth of other matters is to be examined and made out by them, but they themselves are to be admitted without examination and proof, being not capable of it, forasmuch as they are *indemonstrable*,

monstrable, I mean in their own Science, *a priori*, which is strict and proper demonstration.

But besides these *subordinate*, there are other *primo prima principia*, original and supreme principles, which are *Transcendental* and run through all Sciences, and therefore are not capable of receiving confirmation from any. Such as are those in *Metaphysics* and *Geometry*; that the whole is greater than the part; and that it is impossible that the same thing should be, and not be, at the same time, and the like; which carry in themselves such clearness, and so great an evidence to the understanding, that it is not possible to offer any thing that can be more evident, whereby they may be either confirmed or explained.

Now to apply this to the matter in hand. I say there is no *Proposition in Metaphysics*, no *axiom, definition or postulatam in Geometry*, that carries in it a greater certainty and evidence than this, that what God hath affirmed is infallibly true; which is the first and fundamental principle of all revealed Religion. And when upon due tryal and search, I have found that God hath revealed such a Doctrine, then in pursuance of that *first principle*, I am bound without more ado, to yield a firm and unshaken assent unto it.

Further, to take away all doubt that may be made about the Revelation it self; there is another secondary, *subordinate principle* in Divinity, which is taken for granted by all Christians, *viz.* that the *holy Scriptures* doe contain a discovery of the mind and will of God. And though there hath been some disputes raised about the *sufficiency and completeness* of this rule; yet it is on all hands agreed, that what is contained there, is undoubtedly true; because the *holy Pen-men* were directed and inspired by the Holy Ghost. So that though this Proposition, *viz.* that the *Scriptures are the word of God*, is capable of being proved by other extrinsecal arguments, such as are *Miracles, universal Tradition, &c.* (not but that there are certain Marks and Characters of Divinity contained in the Scriptures themselves) yet there is no need of it in the case before us; because our Adversaries doe grant it, at least they seem to do

do so, and *at some times*; for with these sort of restrictions, I am forced to qualify that former concession; because at *other times*, by several bold and daring reflections which they make upon these holy Writings, they give us more than a bare suspicion, that they do not firmly believe their authority and inspiration.

But to let that pass; the main thing now in question is, whether the *Doctrines* in dispute between them and us, are *Revealed* by God, and contained in the *holy Scriptures*. We say they are, as may be made to appear from the express declarations of those holy writings; the *plain, natural, obvious* construction of the words lead us into that meaning which we put upon them, neither are they capable of any other, without the greatest and most *violent distortion* of the words, and consequently an unpardonable prevarication in the Interpreters.

To this they say, that the words if construed in the first *obvious, literal signification*, will contain a *sense* which they can not easily reconcile to their reason; which if they are bound to admit, then they must act and believe *against reason*, and consequently cannot give a satisfactory account to themselves or others, (according to the advice of St. Peter before mentioned, in his 1 *Epist.* 3. *ch.* 15 v.) who shall *ask them a reason of the Hope, or Faith that is in them*. Yes say I, both they and we can give a reason, and a very sufficient one for our *belief of these Doctrines viz. the Revelation of God*, which is an irrefragable ground of Assent.

They still urge, that they cannot *comprehend* the Doctrines of the *Trinity* and *Incarnation*, for instance, which are proposed to their belief. That's true indeed, but cannot be helped; and should be no impediment to their Faith, which is founded, as we said before, not in the *agreement* of divine truths to our understandings, but in the *Revelation of God*. And to require any other sort of proof of the doctrines themselves, after we are once convinced that they come from God, is one of the most *absurd and irrational* things in the world; besides the *impiety* of it, which we shall afterwards account for; because it puts us upon *doubting of*, and calling into question the *veracity*

racity of God, and thereby subverting the foundation of all truth and certainty.

Now tho this in general might suffice to shew the unreasonableness of this pretence of our Adversaries, *viz.* that our Religion is repugnant to reason, which they offer in order to justify, or excuse their infidelity; yet because it is that which they glory and triumph in, and by which many, and among them perhaps, some *well meaning* men are seduced and beguiled, who have not either leisure or abilities to look beyond the surface and first appearance of things; it will be requisite that this matter should be a little farther enquired into and explained: By which I doubt not but to make it appear, that all this *clamor* which they raise against our Faith, as being *without*, and *above*, or *against* reason, is but a *popular outcry*, by which they would awaken the fears of the weak and unwary; but is not really built upon any good grounds, nor supported with such reasons and arguments, as they themselves will abide by; when these things come strictly and closely to be examined.

First then, they tell us plainly and boldly, that nothing is to be admitted in Religion which *surpasses* the reach of our understanding, not only distinctly to *perceive*, but fully and adequately to *comprehend*. Whatever else is offered to our belief, if it comes not within this compass, is all *blunder and absurdity*, owing either to the ignorance of the unskilful and injudicious, or to the contrivance of the more crafty and designing, who taking advantage of the weakness and credulity of simple and well meaning men, impose what they please upon them under the notion of sublime and incomprehensible mysteries; which they themselves *secretly despise*, but yet *openly profess*, as finding them highly serviceable to the designs of their ambition and covetousness.

Schlichtingius who is the man that hath written pro-

Quicquid autem nobis revelatum est, quicquid à nobis credi debet, id nequaquam rationis captum excedit, aut excedere potest. Unde apparet nihil esse in Theologia, quatenus quidpiam revelatum est, aut credi debet, de quo recta ratio judicare non possit, immo non debeat. Cont. Meissn. Artic. de Trin. p. 123.

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lessly upon this subject, in his answer to Meisnerus, tells us again and again frequently and roundly, that there is *nothing in Religion but what our understanding may and ought to judge of*, so that whatever exceeds the reach and comprehension of reason, ought to be no part of our *Creed*. In short, reason is that *supreme judge*, before whose *Tribunal* all the doctrines of Religion are to be cited, which are there to be sifted and examined, the nature and grounds of them strictly to be enquired into, that after due examination and tryal, our understandings may be enabled to pass sentence, concerning their truth or falshood; and consequently to admit or reject them as things *fit for*, or *unbecoming* a wise mans belief. For the Articles of our Faith, must be such ¹ as *rectæ rationi sint prorsus consentanei, & qui cum recta ratione omni ex parte consentiant.*

The like expressions are every where to be found in the late Writings of our English Unitarians. God never teaches us *any thing*, say they, *but what we have clear and distinct Ideas of. Nothing is ² Revealed but what is agreeable to our notions, and proportioned to our Capacities.* There are Capacities in men to *judge of Religion by*, which Capacities, they say, are *Adequate, or Commensurate to the Doctrines of Religion*, (if so, nothing exceeds their Comprehension) so that there is an *exact Conformity between the principles of the one and the other.*

Thus we see how they deliver themselves upon this head: which Opinion of theirs, they confirm with two Arguments, the one taken from the design of *Revelation*, and the other from the nature of *Faith*. First for *Revelation*, they say that nothing *Revealed* can be *Mysterious*: Because *Revelation* is the

¹ *Non ergo nobis imaginari talia in Christi religione dogmata debemus, quæ rectæ rationis examen judiciumque refugiant: quin potius talia omnia esse censenda sunt, quæ cum recta ratione omni ex parte consentiant, & eo ipso fidem apud cordatos mereri velint. Hinc Paulus Christianam Religionem, rationalem cultum, i. e. rectæ rationi prorsus consentaneum, appellare non dubitavit. Ip. Ibid. p. 75.*

² See Letter to the Universities, p. 33, 34. Impartial account of the word *Mystery*, p. 18.

¹ discovery of things that before were unknown, but thereby are made plain, open, and easy to be understood: so that *a blind man seeing, and a mystery revealed are like expressions*, that is, equally absurd.

²dly, They confirm it from the nature of ³ Faith, which they say, and we say also the same thing, consists in *assensu*, in the assent of the mind. Now this *assent* follows the judgment that reason formes of the truth and certainty of any Doctrine or Proposition; and judgment is an act of the understanding: for no man can judg rightly of what he hath no knowledg of. And therefore that we may bring the parts of this Argument together; Faith is an act of know-

¹ *Mysteria divina non idcirco mysteria dicuntur, quod etiam revelata omnem intellectum captumque transcendunt, sed quod non nisi ex divina revelatione cognosci possunt. Nam quid alioquin revelatione opus esset, si ea non minus post revelationem, quam ante nobis ignota nec intellecta manerent.* Schlichting. adversus Meisn. Articulo de Trin. p. 70.

Fatemur aliquos fidei articulos certo respectu supra rationem esse, sed non simpliciter, nec quatenus revelati sunt, aut credi debent. Quis enim alioquin & revelationi & fidei locus esset. Id. Ibid. p. 123.

Vocuntur ergo mysteria, non respectu temporis presentis quo jam patefacta sunt, sed prateriti, quo adhuc abscondita latebant. Nec quia postquam revelata sunt, cum ratione pugnant; sed quia ante suam revelationem, a sola ratione excogitari non poterant. Limb. Th. Christ. Lib. 1. Cap. 12. p. 46.

² Account of the word Mystery p. 18.

³ *Diximus paulo ante, nihil credi posse, quod a ratione capi & intelligi nequeat. Nam fides in assensu consistit; assensus judicium consequitur; judicium autem de re ignota & non intellecta nullum est. Et qui rem credit non intellectam, ipse quid credit nescit, vereque nihil credit.* Schlicht. libro jam Cit. p. 125.

Whatsoever God hath designed we should believe, he hath made us capable of having distinct and clear Ideas of. God hath set the same limits to our belief as he hath to our perceptions; and belief belongs to us as we are rational Creatures. What is above our reason to apprehend, is also above our belief; without the bounds of our reason, we are but upon the same level with the Beasts, and are no more then they, capable of belief, or of having any thing revealed to us. *Lett. to the Unvers.* p. 33.

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ledg, and what we *know*, it seems, we must fully *comprehend*. At least it must be so in the affairs of Religion: for though it may be allowed that there are *Mysteries of art*, and of *nature*, yet if we believe one of our rational Infidels, there can be none in Divinity; for this reason, *that the former, are the objects of our Curiosity, which no body is bound to know. But the objects of our Faith ought to be clearer and more accessible to reason, because our Salvation is concerned in it.* In short, *the Mystery of God is nothing less than a thing unintelligible, and incomprehensible to reason.* For these words, when applyed to Religion, are with them equipollent terms, and signify the same thing. And therefore they say the *Gospel is a Revelation and not a Mystery*, these two being allways put by them in opposition to each other.

But sure these men are not in earnest when they talk at this rate. And therefore in order to know whether they are so or not; I must make bold to propose a few questions to them, in which, I would desire to be plainly and positively resolved.

And first, I must ask them whether they do really and truly believe that *there is a God*? I know they will be apt to say, that this is an impertinent and a malicious question, because it may lead men into a suspicion that they really do not so. But they must thank themselves for giving us any just grounds to suspect the sincerity of their Faith in this particular; as will appear by what follows. Therefore 2dly, If they do *believe in God*, since they have this *knowledge* of him conveyed to them not only by the *light of Nature*, but likewise by *Revelation*, and the discovery that God hath made of himself in the Holy Scriptures.

I must in the next place enquire, whether they do *perfectly and adequately* know him? since it is the nature of *Revelation*, as they told us before, to make all things plain and clear and easy; so that there is no longer any thing relating to the *existence* of God that is *mysterious*, nothing in his divine nature or perfections but what they do *fully and perfectly comprehend*.

Actius and *Eunomius* of old, as we heard before, boasted of this *perfect knowledge* which they were possessed of, to that

1 Account of the word Mystery p. 18. p. 12. & 13.

degree, that they doubted not to affirm, that they knew God as perfectly as God knew them; yea as fully and completely, as he knew himself. See p. 10. So that as to their intellectual capacitys and accomplishments, they were upon the same level, and stood upon equal terms with their Maker. And the like accomplishments in point of knowledge, our Unitarians must be endowed with upon the former supposition, viz. that there is an *exact conformity* between *Reason and Revelation*, and that whatever this latter proposes, we must have *distinct, clear and adequate conceptions* of.

Lastly, I would be informed by them in the next place, whether they do believe God to be *really infinite* in his nature and attributes, and consequently if they do so, whether it be possible for them to have this *perfect, adequate knowledge* of him, which yet upon the account of the above named revelation, they challenge and may pretend to; because it seems to be a plain contradiction to affirm, that a *finite mind*, can comprehend what is *infinite*. Here Socinus and his elder Disciples, Vorstius, Crellius, &c. were truer to their first Principle, viz. of the *proportion and conformity* that is to be observed between *faith and reason*. For finding the notion of *Infinite* too hard for their understanding to grapple with, which baffles and confounds their imaginations, let them turn them which way they will; therefore to make the belief of a God *rational*, and not inconsistent with their former assertion; they were resolved, since they could not *bring up their Ideas* to that height and sublimity, to which the fancy and fears of superstitious men, it seems, had raised the Deity; where they encompassed him with a *splendor* to which no *mortal eye* could approach, and cloathed him with such *vast perfections* as no *humane understanding* could conceive; they were resolved to *bring him down* to the level of their own imaginations. And therefore in their Writings, we find they still represent him as a *material Being*, *finite* in his nature, and *limited* in all his perfections, *Composed of parts*, and *cloathed with passions*, as we weak, frail mortals are.

But our modern Unitarians, being urged of late with the

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absurdity and impiety of these notions concerning God, which they found gave great offence, and were not capable of being maintained; they have wisely given them up: at least for the present they have laid them aside, till they may be able to resume them with less observation and scandal. For notwithstanding their present concessions, I have reason to suspect, that they still adhere to the old notions of their Forefathers.

But to let that pass. Now indeed, when charged with denying the *infinite nature* of God, and his *unlimited perfections* of Power, Presence, Knowledge, &c. they tell the world that this is all fiction and Calumny. For they good men, believe God to be *Omniscient, Omnipresent, &c.* as much as any *Trinitarian* who-soever he be. But yet when pressed how the belief of these attributes can be consistent with their former position, that *nothing revealed, and to be believed, can surpass reason*, which yet these immense perfections must exceed; forasmuch as our facultys are not capacious enough to grasp and enclose what is infinite, which exceeds all limits, and easily breaks through all restraints: to solve this difficulty, they have ventured upon this absurd and impudent assertion, *viz. That the intellectual comprehension of a finite mind, may be, and actually is in some respects infinite. Because what is finite with respect to the extension of its parts, may be infinite with respect to its powers; as the mind of man is, they say, with relation to its intellectual capacity and comprehension.*

We see what desperate shifts these men are forced to make use of, to maintain this impious opinion, concerning the *proportion and equality* between *knowledge and belief*; invented on purpose to destroy the doctrines of our holy Religion: And provided they can do so, they care not what they say. Neither indeed, need they be concerned about it; for what they say, they can as easily unsay again; which, in their writings upon this subject, they venture to do without any regard to mode-

1 Animadversions on the Bishop of Worcester's Sermon in vindication of the Mysteries of the Christian Faith, p. 8.

ity, shame, decency, and that common respect which is due to the most ordinary Readers. For if they had any regard to them, they could never venture to insult over their understanding so far, as to obtrude upon them so senseless and palpable a contradiction as that now mentioned. They may as well say, that a *finite body* hath an *infinite extension*; and that a mans hand tho it be *finite* with respect to its *parts*, yet may have an *infinite capacity*, and thereby enclose all the waters of the Ocean in the hollow of it. This they may say if they please, and if they will abide by it, they can never be either *convinced* or *confuted*: for no absurdity can be urged as the consequence of this position, which can be more senseless then the position it self.

Well? but supposing what they say is true; may we not reasonably enquire, or, if you please, without enquiry suppose, that this *infinite capacity* of mens understanding, can comprehend all the *finite* properties and powers of *nature*, as well as the *infinite* nature and perfections of *God*? sure one would think it should. And yet for all this there are insuperable difficulties in nature, which their reason cannot surmount: knots too hard for their understandings to untie. This they are forced to acknowledge to be true. But why then may not *Religion* claim the same privilege as *Philosophy*; and the *Book of God*, crave the same allowances which they make to the *Book of Nature*; in which many strange things are related, which they do not think fit to reject barely, because they cannot comprehend them.

This plea tho at some times they will not allow of, as we heard before; yet at other times they are graciously pleased to admit; and thereby are obliged to part with their beloved position which makes reason *commensurate* to revelation: be-

I 'Tis said in the Sermon that we do not comprehend the least spire of grass: I acknowledge the truth of this saying, and will adde to it, that all the works of God have upon them this signature; that is, they are incomprehensible by Humane understanding. Again, for my own part, I confess that we converse every day with things, none of which we comprehend, *Id. p. 4th.*

cause there are several things, not only in *art* and *nature*, but in ¹ in *Religion* likewise which are still *mysteries* to us, and which we cannot comprehend. Therefore since this pretence will not hold, they have another answer in reserve, *viz.* ² that the Articles of our Faith, which we style *Mysteries*, are not only *above*, but directly *repugnant* to their reason; *contrary to the light of nature and reason*; and such which *contradict and destroy our natural Ideas*, and therefore they cannot believe them.

It is true indeed, that what is *revealed*, I mean as far as it is so, is no longer a *Mystery*, because Revelation is the unfolding or discovery of things which before were secrets. Thus it is no longer a *Mystery*, that God hath a Son begotten of his *own substance* from all Eternity. 'Tis no longer a *secret* that this Son was made flesh, having united himself to our nature, in which he suffered, and thereby satisfied the justice of God for the sins of Mankind. But the manner of this *Eternal Generation*, and of this *Hypostatical union*, are not revealed, and therefore continue *Mysteries* still; which no understanding how profound soever can fathom, no skill or knowledge can explain.

Tho our Adversaries do indeed disown *these Mysteries* of our Faith now mentioned, for that reason because they are such, yet they are forced to acknowledge that there are yet other difficulties in *Religion*, which they cannot perfectly know. And therefore when the late Bp. of *Worcester* in his Vindication of the *Mysteries* of the Christian Faith, had laid down this Proposition, *that God may oblige us to believe what we cannot comprehend*; the *Socinian* ³ that pretends to answer him, tells us, that he readily grants his Lordship that point; and withal assures him, that he utterly mistakes in thinking that the *Unitarians* deny the *Articles of the new Christianity*, or *Athanasian Religion*, as he styles it, because they are *Mysteries*, or because we do not comprehend them. That his Lordship, might have saved himself the trouble and pains of ten pages in his Sermon, in which he seeks to prove that there are several things in *Nature, Art and Religion* which are

1 *Id. ibid.*2 *Ibid.*3 *Id. p. 4, 5.*

Mysteries to us, for they do acknowledge it, and this concession he saith, doth no hurt to the Unitarians, p. 4. and 5.

No? I thought it had. What else mean those impertinent clamors, so often and so loudly repeated by them, that our doctrines are *above reason*, and therefore not to be admitted. Because whatever is so, contradicts the *nature of Faith*, and the *design of Revelation*, as we heard before: so that the Articles of our Faith, can be no longer *mysterious* and *incomprehensible*, for our Religion is a *revelation* and not a *mystery*. Nay, there is so great a repugnance it seems between *faith and mystery*, that *it is more easy to believe a contradiction than a mystery*, for this reason, *that in a contradiction we have Ideas, and those clear and distinct, so that we know it is impossible: but in a mystery we have no Ideas at all.*

Now what ever difference or opposition there may be between *Faith* and *Mystery*, I am sure it may much easier be reconciled, then these sayings of theirs, which are downright, palpable, staring contradictions, (to use their own words) which they utter upon this occasion without any restriction or qualification; but smoothly slide from the *denial*, to the *affirmation* of the same thing; without any hesitation, and without any interval in a manner, in the same page sometimes, and almost in the same breath. But we must be content to take things as they lye before us, and therefore how much soever this contradicts their former assertion, we must examine it.

They say then, that the Articles of Religion which are in dispute between us, are such as *contradict their clear and distinct Ideas*, and are *contrary to their reason*, which is the great rule by which they are to judge of the truth or falshood of things; and therefore they cannot believe them. Here are two things to be examined. First, whether the Articles of our Religion be really contrary and repugnant to reason. 2dly, Supposing such a repugnance, whether that opposition to reason be a justifiable ground and warrant for them to reject them.

1 Lett. to the Univers. Chap: 10. of Mysteries, p. 32.

As to the first, when they say that our Religion is opposite to *reason*, I would feign know of them what it is that they mean by *reason*, which they so often appeal to as the grand measure and standard of Truth, and by a conformity or disagreement to which, they will either admit or reject those things which are proposed to their belief. This is a point necessary to be rightly stated: because the word *Reason*, having different significations, according to the diversity of those senses, this question may receive a different determination.

Now *Reason*, we must know, how certain and uniform soever it may be in it self, yet may admit of great variety and difference when we speak of it in *hypothesis*, as it is lodged in particular persons. For as it is to be found and resides in particular men, it is nothing but the *light* and *knowledge* which every man hath in that faculty of the Soul which we call the *Understanding*; and those *notions and principles* with which *that* is furnished, which way soever men come by them: whether by *Study, Observation, and Experience* of their own; or by *Education, Instruction, or Information* from others. By these Principles it is, that men judge of the truth or falshood of other matters, which they generally admit, or reject, as they agree, or are found repugnant to these notions. Now these being so *various*, and sometimes directly *contrary* to each other in different men, arising from the difference of *Complexion, Education and Studies*; to which may be added, *Interest, Passion and Vices*, which are observed to have a great stroke in the forming of these different notions and principles; they must therefore be a very uncertain, nay, very often a wrong measure of truth and falshood. For the nature of things hereby will be quite altered: *right and wrong, straight and crooked, truth and falshood* will vary according to the difference of these principles. The different *Sects of Philosophers*, had different sets of notions, which were their reason: now what was true by one principle, was false by another, which was quite contrary. And therefore in this sense, what is *repugnant* to reason, is so far from being always false, that sometimes it must be certain and infallibly true, otherwise both parts of a contradiction may be reconciled.

And

Thus, to bring down these general considerations to our particular case: we shall make no difficulty to grant, that several parts and branches of our Religion, are contrary to those *notions and principles* whereby many judge of the truth or fallhood of *Religious matters*, and which they call, and to them, is their *reason*. And this is so far from being a prejudice or disparagement to our Faith, that on the other hand we rather glory in it, *viz.* that our Religion teaches us to believe many things, which bare reason, tho true, cannot comprehend; and which are quite opposite to, and destructive of several of those other *principles and notions* which men call reason, some of which are *false*, and others *absurd, impious* and some of them *Blasphemous*.

Thus the Christian Religion is opposite to the notions and principles of *Jews, Mahometans* and *Pagans*, and therefore is rejected by them as contrary to their Ideas and Conceptions: Tho no good Christian I hope, thinks the worse of his Religion for all that. I must indeed, and no body can be justly offended with me for so doing, except the *Socinians* out of that number, who have turned *Runegadoes*, and impiously renounced a great part of the Christian Doctrine; and would feign persuade others, if any can be so wretchedly sottish as to be governed by their Counsels, to deliver it up likewise in compliance with the *notions*, and in a complement to the *reasons* of these *Infidels*. But perhaps they will reply, that by *reason*, to which they say the mysteries of our Faith are repugnant, they mean those *common notions*, and *general Principles* which are universally received, not only by this or that particular person, this or that sect and party of men, but by all mankind who have the use and exercise of reason.

Now I would fain fix these men here if it were possible, because this concession would be of great service to us, if they would abide by it. Particularly, it would bring along with it this advantage, that the plea for an *universal liberty* and *toler-*

1 The Letter of Resolution concerning the Doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, p. 18. See the Third part of the Preservative, and the words of *Socinus* cited there to this purpose, p. 23, 24.

ration in the affairs of Religion, would hereby be lopped off; which yet upon the account of the different conceptions and Ideas, that different persons have; by which they are to judge of things, (and which judgment they extend to certain matters of the highest consequence in Religion) they earnestly contend for.

No man who is any way conversant in the writings of the *Socinians* and *Remonstrants*, but very well knows, what great charity and compassion they pretend to have for the weaknesses and frailties, the ignorance and prejudices of men; and upon that score become advocates for the before mentioned Toleration of different *Opinions*, and *practices* consequently, in Religion: For men will *act* in pursuance of their *Principles*, whether you will or no. And the Arguments which they make use of in defence of this Plea, are taken from this Topick of reason, *viz.* that it is that *Light* which God hath given us for our guidance and direction in all affairs. That it is the *great rule* by which all Doctrines are to be tryed and judged. Now this Plea must extend it self, and be equally allowed to all persons, how *shallow* or *absurd* soever their *Conceptions* and *Ideas* are, which yet are *reason* to them, and by which every man is, as they say, *to judge for himself and God for us all*. And therefore if any *man* by hearkening to the dictates of it, falls into any errors and mistakes, let them be what they will, never so mischievous and dangerous in themselves, yet with respect to *him*, they must be *harmless* because *unavoidable*; and therefore call for our allowance and toleration.

Now all this *Apology* how plausible soever it may appear, yet would be effectually overthrown by that former Concession, if these men would abide by it, *viz.* that nothing revealed in Scripture should be rejected only because it is contrary to our *private Ideas*, except likewise it should seem to contradict the *common* and *received principles* of mankind. Our *own notions* are oftentimes false, and our reasonings fallacious; and the Scriptures are given us on purpose to *inform* and *direct*, and by which therefore we should *regulate* our notions in the

the affairs of Religion. And if any thing delivered there should appear contrary to our private conceptions, we ought not to reject *that position*, but to lay aside and renounce our *own notions*; because by doing the former, we Censure and Controle the Revelation, which cannot be done without the just imputation of *Pride, Obstinacy and Presumption*, which are ill qualities not to be tolerated. But by the latter, we only acknowledge the *wisdom and truth* of God, and submit to his *authority and power*.

If therefore they were in good earnest, they ought plainly and publickly to make this honest declaration; that it would become all men who really *believe* and have any *reverence* for the Holy Scriptures, to bring *honest and sincere intentions* along with them to the perusal of them; to make use of their reason indeed to find out their true sense and meaning; but by no means to *judge of*, and to *interpret* them by any *preconceived opinions and Ideas* of our own, and then bend and pervert the Scriptures to give countenance to them. But on the contrary, they ought to submit their own opinions to the Revelation, to *correct, reform*, or totally *lay them aside*, when they are found repugnant to it. Otherwise innumerable mischiefs will follow from thence, with relation to *Religion* in general, and particularly to the *Holy Scriptures*, which will hereby be exposed to scorn and contempt, and in time come to be laid aside; as they are in great measure by *Quakers* and other *Enthusiasts*. And therefore it is not fit that any should be *excused or tolerated* in this pernicious course, which all sober and indifferent persons must judge to be the effect of *pride, stubbornness, malice and perverseness*, which makes men refuse to submit to the instructions of the holy Ghost speaking in his word, and thereby render that word useless and insignificant.

This they ought to say in pursuance of the above named concession, and not to soothe up these unhappy men in their infidelity, under colour of following their *reason*; which as we said before, as it is to be found in particular persons, is a *slippery and fallible* thing: and therefore it will become men in point of

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wisdom

wisdom and prudence, not to be over fond and tenacious of their own notions; but to be ready to hearken to other Arguments, and particularly *Revelation*, which is a *medium* of proving the truth of things, tho not so *evident*, yet of equal *certain-ty*, I mean *in it self*, with *sense* or *science*. But if they should deal thus honestly and fairly, alas what would become of their old friends the *Gnosticks*, *Valentinians*, *Marcionites*, *Manichees*, &c. who were wont to bring the Scriptures to the Tribunal of their own reason, there to be sifted and examined, and then either denied and rejected, if they were found contrary to their fancy: or else by interpolations, or, which is equally perfidious, by false and wretched Interpretations, to be rendered conformable to their private and preconceived opinions: whom yet our *Unitarians* claim as of their side and party, giving them the right hand of fellowship, and owning them *pro-veris in Christo fratribus*; true friends and bretheren in Christ.

"It was the known practice of those Hereticks, as the holy Martyr St. Polycarp of old complained in his Epist. to the Philippians, μεθοδεύειν τὰ λόγια ἑ καὶ κυρίως πρὸς τὰς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας. To deal deceitfully with the Scriptures, and model them as it were, according to their own lusts and humors.

"The Valentinians as Irenæus, who was well acquainted with their lewd practices, tells us, were wont to pervert those holy writings by false and adulterate expositions, and to adapt them thereby to their own foolish and wicked inventions. Talia igitur de pleromate ipsorum, & plasmate universorum dicunt, adaptare cupientes ea quæ bene dicta sunt, iis quæ male adinventata sunt ab ipsis. Non solum autem ex Evangelicis & Apostolicis tentant ostensiones facere, convertentes interpretationes, & adulterantes expositiones: sed etiam ex lege & prophetis, cum quando multæ parabolæ & Allegoriæ sunt dictæ, & in multa trahi possint, ambiguum per expositionem propensius ad figmentum suum & dolos adaptantes, in captivitatem ducunt à veritate eos, qui non firmam fidem in Deum patrem, & filium Dei conservant, Lib. 1. Cap. 1. p. 7.

"Ordinem quidem & textum Scripturarum supergradientes, & quantum in ipsis est solvantes membra veritatis. Transfe-
runt

"runt autem & transfigunt, & alterum ex altero facientes, se-
 "ducunt multos, ex iis quæ aptant ex dominicis eloquiis male
 "composito phantasmati, Id. ibid. p. 14. *When he drew this cha-
 "racter, one would think he had the writings of the Socinians before
 "him: to which it doth so exactly agree.*

"Marcion, that first born of the Devil, as the holy Martyr St. Po-
 "lycarp, without the breach of Charity and Moderation, thought he
 "might style him; went a bolder way to work with the Scriptures, for
 "when he met with any knotty passage which he could not untie, he cut
 "his way thro it, and therefore Tertull. in his Book De Præscript.
 "Cap. 38. Tells us that he did exerte & palam Machæra, non stylo
 "uti. Cutting and lopping off, particularly in the Gospel of St. Luke,
 "what he could not by a perverse interpretation model to his purpose.

"The Manichees claimed to themselves an arbitrary and absolute
 "authority over the New Testament, for the Old they totally rejected,
 "by admitting or refusing pro libitu, what parts of it they thought fit.
 "What they found agreeable in it to their own opinions, that they would
 "graciously allow to be true and genuine; but when any passages were
 "produced which plainly contradicted them, then presently they cried
 "out that these passages were falsified and corrupted. Hoc solent,
 "quando non habent quod respondeant, dicere. Aug. Con. A-
 "dam. Cap. 3. *This for ought I know is a more excusable practice
 "then that of the Socinians. For tho' the Manichees, by this unli-
 "mited power which they pretended to over the Scriptures, plainly over-
 "threw their authority, and with it the whole Christian Faith, which
 "was thereby made an uncertain, arbitrary thing, which men by this
 "pretence might change and alter at their pleasure: (Ista dum dicunt,
 "omnem fidem Christianam conantur evertere, as St. Aug. ob-
 "serves in that place,) Yet they hereby seemed to shew a kind of reve-
 "rence for the holy Scriptures, whose authority and truth they durst not
 "plainly deny, but eluded it by this miserable pretence, viz. that what
 "was produced against them was not written by the inspired Writers,
 "but was falsified and inserted by other hands. Whereas our Socini-
 "ans pretend to own the truth and integrity of the Scriptures, and yet
 "will not believe them in the plain, evident, natural construction of the
 "words; but wrest and distort them by wretched and perverse inter-
 "pretations, to give countenance to their Antichristian opinions. I said,*

"they

“they pretend to own the integrity of the Scriptures, but I am afraid it
 “is but a pretence. For of late, in several of their papers, which they
 “with unparalleld insolence, and an open affront to Religion and the
 “Laws, have ventured to publish, they do not only in sly hints, but in open
 “and broad expressions tell the world, that our Bible, at least the New
 “Testament, hath bin falsified and corrupted almost throughout, in all
 “those passages which we cite in proof and vindication of the Divinity
 “of our Saviour. So that they want, as they say, but a true Bible, and
 “then they would dispute with us out of it, See the Consider. on the
 “Explications of the Doctrine of the Trinity, p. 29, 30. &c. By
 “this we see that our modern Unitarians strike in with the Mani-
 “chees, and justify them in great measure, in the outcry which they have
 “raised against the perfection and integrity of the Scriptures. — St.
 “Austin’s reproof therefore of this bold calumny, will equally respect
 “Manichees and Socinians. Non illis placet aliquid, quia hoc in
 “sublimi autoritate scriptum legitur; sed ideo scriptum videtur,
 “quia hoc illis placuit. Sed hoc non est subicere idem scriptu-
 “ris, sed scripturas sibi subicere. *Aug. Contra Faustum Cap. 32.*

But why do I upon this occasion mention either their old or new Friends, (*Muggletonians, Quakers &c.*) since this concession of theirs, now insisted upon, equally involves themselves in the same censure and condemnation, viz. for not admitting plain and clear Revelations, in some matters of high concernment, only because they contradict their own private conceits, but have not bin judged repugnant to the common and received principles of reason. I shall instance in four particulars, the two first of which concern the nature and perfections of Almighty God, which are plainly revealed in Scriptures, and yet as boldly, in defiance of them, denied by *Socinus* and his followers.

Now

I To prevent the trouble of repeating what I have formerly wrote upon this Subject, I must refer the Reader to the First part of the *Preservative*, and particularly to what is said in the 65. and following Pages. Which will sufficiently inform him what the Notions and Belief of the *Socinians* are concerning God: which whosoever Reads, will be Convinced, that they have in this, as in other matters, acted and spoke according

Now that which we believe of God is, that he is an *Infinite Spirit*; both these being included in the formal notion of him, which we have from right reason, as well as Revelation. First we say he is a *Spirit*; Socinus and his Disciples will not allow him to be *immaterial*, tho the Scriptures very plainly, and in express terms assure us that he is so. They cannot justify themselves in this denial, by saying that the notion of a *Spirit* is contradictory to the *reason and conceptions of mankind*. For not only all true *Christians*, but *Jews* and the wiser *Pagans* have, and do acknowledg it. But the *Socinians* not being able to raise their thoughts and conceptions above matter; nor consequently to judge of any thing, but by those *corporeal and sensible species* which still clogg and fetter their imaginations; they have discharged the notion of a *Spirit* out of the world.

And for this reason they in the 2d place, deny likewise the *Infinity* of God, which must follow from the denial of his *immateriality*. For whatever is *material* is *extended*, and must have all the *dimensions* of extension, and particularly a *superficies*, which is the limit and boundary of it; and therefore must be *finite*. Upon which account, they have told us, that the notion of *infinite* is unconceivable, as being *impossible*, and therefore is so far from denoting a *perfection*, that it implies a *plain contradiction*. But yet as impossible and unconceivable as it is, it hath bin believed not only by *Christians*, but by *Jews*, and acknowledged likewise by *Heathen Poets* and *Philosophers*. I must except the *Mahometans*, who entertain the like gross and material conceptions of God. And it may be their *Antitrinitarian* friends here, have borrowed this Doctrine out of their *Divine*

cording to their own shallow and sensual Ideas, but have not governed themselves as became them, either by the declarations of Scripture, or by those just and sober apprehensions which right reason hath furnished many honest *Heathens* with. I Their sayings, the Reader to save himself the trouble of turning over many Books, may find Collected to his hand by the Learned *Huetius* in his *Quæst. Alnetanae*, lib. 2. and thither I refer him for Information of what they believed of the nature of God; and what sentiments they had of a future State, and of the Eternal punishments reserved for the wicked.

Alcoran.

Alcoran. I am sure neither the *Book of God*, nor the *Book of Nature* could furnish them with any such lewd, gross and carnal notions, so disagreeable, and so dishonorable to their blessed Maker.

Perhaps our *English Unitarians* will pretend that they do not come within the compass of this charge; because they good men are convinced of the fallhood of those *Ancient Socinian* Opinions, and therefore disown them, having made free and frequent acknowledgments of the *Infinite* and *Spiritual* nature of God. But I doubt the sincerity of their Faith in these particulars. For notwithstanding these declarations, they have ventured to affirm that of the Soul of man, which perfectly and clearly overthrows them. For all the wise part of the World that have ever believed that there is such a being as a *Spirit*, distinct from matter, have likewise acknowledged that the *Soul* or *Mind* of Man is a *Spiritual* or *immaterial Substance*. So that if the *Soul* be not a *Spirit*, there is no such being in nature. The same Arguments and proofs that are brought to evince that there is any being *distinct* from, and *superior* to matter, are clear demonstrations that the *Soul* is *immaterial*. And these among others, are the two great faculties of it, the *Will*, and *Understanding*, and the actions of *Reason* and *Choice* which flow from them.

And these arguments are of equal force with Relation to God and Man: only with this difference, that the Faculties or Attributes of wisdom and power, being without bounds or limits in God, prove him to be an *Infinite Spirit*: but being limited in the Soul of Man, prove it to be an *inferior and finite Spirit*; but both for the same reasons are to be accounted *Spirits*.

Now as to the Soul of Man, if you would know what notion our *Unitarians* have of it, one of the chief¹ of them will tell you; *that it is composed of the parts of matter, which tho in their own nature lifeless, and senseless, yet they doe (for all that) in some positions and textures, acquire life, sensation,*

¹ Author of the *Animadversions* before mentioned p. 4.

and not only so, but even volition, memory and reason. If this be so, the fundamental distinction between *Matter* and *Spirit* is quite taken away; and there can be nothing left but *Matter* and *Motion* whereby to explain all the appearances of Nature; tho' how there can be *Motion*, if there be not such a thing as a *Spirit*, is equally as unconceivable, as that there should be *Liberty* and *Reason* without it.

But so it must be, according to this *hypothesis*: all the ordinary and extraordinary actions and events that have happened in the world; all the power and wisdom that hath ever bin discovered in the preservation and government of it, must be ascribed to this *Omnipotent and Omniscient matter*. But I must recall those last *Epithets*; for this *mighty matter* that is able to perform such wonders, yet will have no force and efficacy, that is, will have neither *power*, nor *liberty*, nor *wisdom*, except it be in some certain *positions*, and endued with some *peculiar textures and figures*: and if so, this matter must be *finite* in its nature; (for *texture* and *figure* can belong to nothing but what is *finite*;) and consequently must be *limited* in all its faculties and operations. It may therefore be of *prodigious might* indeed, but not *Omnipotent*: of *vast knowledge and comprehension* its true, but by no means *Allwise and Omniscient*. And thus by the account which these *Unitarians* give us of the Soul of man, they have clearly overthrown the notion both of *Infinite*, and *Spirit*, which can be no more an Article of their *Faith*, then it was of the ancient *Socinian Creed*.

3dly, The next truth Revealed in Scripture, and denied by the *Socinians*, is the *Resurrection of the same numerical Body*. It is true, the manner of it is encumbered with many difficulties which are not easily explained; but however, it is not contradictory to the principles of reason nor any prime dictate of it: And therefore it makes up part of the belief, not only of all good *Christians*, but likewise of *Jews* and *Mahometans*. And the *possibility* of it hath been allowed by some *Pagans*: tho' the *certainty* of it, forasmuch as it depends upon the will of God, is owing chiefly to *Revelation*. But our Adversaries because they cannot reconcile it to their own conceptions,

ceptions, have discarded it out of their Systems of Divinity, in contradiction to the *Scripture*, and to the disparagement both of the *infinite knowledge* and *power* of God.

Lastly, the *Eternity of Hell torments*, which is the plain Doctrine of Scripture, acknowledged likewise by *Jews*, *Mahometans*, and by the generality of *Pagans*, is struck out of the Creed by *Socinus* and his followers. Tho of late they have made some pretences to the contrary. I have not time at present to enlarge upon these points, nor to enquire into the absurdity and impiety of them: being such as naturally tend to *Atheism*, and to undermine all Religion, by supplanting those motives and arguments, by which it is chiefly supported and preserved in the World. But I may possibly have occasion to consider them more fully, before I have finished this Discourse. What hath been already said, is sufficient to evince, that when they say that the articles of our Faith are contrary to *reason*, they mean their *own Ideas*, and *Conceptions*: and not the *general notions* of mankind; and it is the former which they would make the measure and rule of truth and falsehood.

But for all this that we have said, they will not forego their first position, that some of our Doctrines, are plain contradictions to the *natural reason* of mankind. And such they say, is the Doctrine of the *Trinity of persons* in the *Unity* of the same *divine nature and substance*. I know they are positive in this matter; and if bold and clamorous affirmations, uttered with all the vehemence and assurance imaginable, be sufficient proofs, then the writings of these our Adversaries, both Antient and Modern, who are equally loud and confident in this charge against us, would afford us plenty of them. In this they all agree, that what we call *Mysteries*, are *impossibilities*, *inconsistencies*, *nonsense*, attended with *apparent*, *multiforme*, *palpable*, *staring Contradictions*, which epithets they particularly apply to the *Trinity* and *Incarnation*.

But I would fain be informed wherein these great absurdities and impossibilities consist; one would imagine by the Epithets before mentioned, of *downright*, *palpable*, *staring*, &c. that our

our assertions concerning the *Trinity*, contained in them plain contradictions, even in the Terms. Now indeed, if we had said that there were *three persons* in the *Trinity*, and that these three were really but *one person*, or, that there were *three Gods*, and but *one God*; or, which is all one, that there are *three Divine Natures, Essences, Substances, or Godheads*, (which are equipollent terms) and yet but *one God*; then they might justly charge us with uttering plain inconsistencies and palpable contradictions. But they know this is false, and therefore to lay any such sayings to the charge of the *Orthodox* asserters of the *Trinity*, is an impudent and a scandalous calumny. Such affirmations and denials, so inconsistent with truth, and so opposite to all decency and modesty, are fit only for these men, who set up *Reason* in opposition to *Revelation*, and therefore as a just punishment of their pride and vanity, are given up to the belief and open profession of such contradictions, which upon these occasions, they deliver without scruple, and without shame.

What we therefore say, is, that there are *Three persons*, and yet but *One God*; and the reason why we say so is, because the same *Numerical Godhead* is communicated from the *Father* to the *Son*, and likewise to the *Holy Ghost*, who proceeds from both. This they say is a contradiction: How! directly, and in terms? no, but in effect, and by an immediate consequence. How doth this appear? why, because no *Divine person* can exist without a *Divine nature*, which *nature* must be multiplied according to the *number* of the persons of which it is predicated: and therefore, being there are *three Persons*, there must be *three Natures*, and consequently *three Gods*. We say no, and our denial of the consequence is founded upon this just reason, viz. that the *Divine nature* is communicated indeed from the *Father*, who is the Fountain and Origine of the Divinity, to the *Son* and *Holy Ghost*; but yet without *division, separation, or multiplication*, and therefore it is still but one: nay, upon that supposition, cannot be said to be more than one, without a plain *Contradiction*. Because where there is no *multiplication*, no *number*, there must be strict and proper *Identity*.

But they say it is impossible that the *same nature* should be communicated to *three persons*. How do they prove that? why because we find it so in other things, for Instance, *Angels and Men*: where every *individual person* hath a distinct *individual nature*, which constitutes him such, and by which he is distinguished from all others: So that where there are *three Angels* or *Men*, there must be *three Angelical* or *Humane natures* and *Essences*. True, it may and must be so in *inferior, finite* beings, because such a *communication* without *division*, or *multiplication*, seems as far as we can discover, to be absolutely repugnant to the nature of a *finite being*, which is *limited* and enclosed within its own particular *subsistence*, and cannot exceed it. Thus for Instance, if the same numerical humane nature that is in *Peter* were in *John*, forasmuch as they are distinct and separate from each other, and may be at vast and immense distances so divided; it must follow that this humane nature is not enclosed within any *bounds* or *limits*, because it may be in different and distant places, and by consequence every where; which is a contradiction to the notion of a *finite being*, such as we suppose the humane nature to be. But how doth this prove that this cannot be so in *God*, and that such a communication of the same *numerical essence*, carries any such contrariety to his *infinite* nature, which knows no such *terms* and *boundaries* as are essential to all *finite beings*. All that can be justly said is, that it is difficult for us to conceive it: because in the whole course and order of natural beings with which we are acquainted, and from our observations of which we frame *hypotheses* and *maxims* of the truth and possibility of things, we cannot find any such *communication* ever was, or is possible to be made: but must therefore that *hypothesis* extend to what is *Infinite*, whose powers and operations infinitely exceed all those of created beings, and consequently surpass our imagination to conceive and apprehend them.

This communication therefore that we are speaking of, may with respect to the persons of the *Trinity*, be true for any thing that reason can demonstrate to the contrary; nay *must* be so, since God hath assured us of it, who can inform us of several things

things concerning himself, which naked unassisted reason cannot discover, nor after it is discovered, can our largest capacities comprehend. Our great pretenders to *reason* therefore would do well to furnish themselves with a little more *Logick*, which would teach them in their argumentations, to keep close to the subject matter of the debate, and not εἰς ἄλλό γένος μεταβαίνειν; else we may be lead into numberless mistakes and absurdities.

Suppose a man should, from the observation which he hath made of *Plants*, pretend to make a judgment of the nature and faculties of *Animals*, and thence should conclude, that it is absolutely impossible that such and such powers and properties should be found in *Animals*, because they imply a plain contradiction to the nature of *Plants*: would not every man at first view discover the absurdity, and laugh at the folly of such argumentation. And yet men may as well do so, as argue from *Body* to *Spirit*, and from *Finite* to *Infinite*.

But say our Adversaries, there are some Contradictions which alike affect *all Beings*, and therefore will be equally extended to both *Finite* and *Infinite*: such as is the *affirmation* and *denial* of the same thing, which are plain inconsistencies, and yet such as make part of our *Belief*. As is evident from the *Athanasian Creed*, wherein we are taught to acknowledge *every Person* (which in number are three viz. *Father, Son and Holy Ghost*) by himself to be God, and Lord; yet we are forbidden to say that there are three Gods, or three Lords. This they stile, with their usual modesty, *a Brutal and inexcusable error in Counting and Numbering*; as if every *Almighty, Eternal, Omniscient person* were not God, a perfect God, and consequently, *three such Persons, three Gods*. We say no, and we have good reason for our denial. And therefore this *error Calculi*, mistake in numbering, affects them and

1 See the Considerations on the Explic. of the Doctrine of the Trin. p. 30. Animadversions on the Sermon of the Bp. of Wor. p. 18. Brief History of the Unit. p. 9. All agreeing in the same Charge, and using the same or like words and expressions.

not us. For we say the *Godhead* is but *One* which resides in the *three Persons*; and therefore are obliged to make that acknowledgment before mentioned: which we must abide by, otherwise we might justly be charged with those impossibilities and inconsistencies, with which they falsely load the *Athanasian Creed*.

For to say that there are, *three Gods*, when there is but *one Godhead*, were a plain Contradiction. Again, to say that tho' this *one Divine Nature and Godhead*, hath *three true, proper, different ways of subsisting*, as it hath in *Father, Son and Holy Ghost*, and yet that there is but *one Person* in the *Godhead*, would equally be a Contradiction. When we therefore say, that there are *three* and those *three but One*, there is a seeming inconsistency, but it is only in the sound of the words, but not in the nature of the thing; because it is not *ad Idem*. *Three* are applyed to the *Persons* which are three, truly and properly distinguished by their personal Characters and Properties: and *One* is applyed to *God*, which by reason of the individual Unity and Identity of the *Godhead*, as we said, is but *One*.

These we acknowledge are Difficulties, but no Contradictions. And therefore, all that reason can collect with any certainty from the foregoing particulars relating to the *Trinity*, is this, that since it is the same *Godhead* that resides in *three Persons*, then assuredly the *Divine Nature*, which exceeds those boundaries within which all *Finite natures* are enclosed, must be properly *Infinite*, which we readily allow and earnestly contend for. In short, tho' some of the Articles of our Faith, and particularly this of the *Trinity*, may contradict some of the *common and received* notions which we have of *material and finite beings*, and in that sense may be *opposite to reason*, yet notwithstanding that opposition, we ought, because they are revealed, firmly to believe them. Which leads me to the second particular proposed to be considered, *viz.* whether a seeming contrariety and opposition to reason, may be a justifiable ground and warrant for men to reject those Articles of our Religion, which are rightly esteemed and styled by us *Mysteries*.

Here

Here the *Socinians* are on the affirmative side of the question in which they are positive and bold, not only disapproving, but in loud and lofty expressions declaiming against the contrary practice as a piece of high *Injustice and Tyranny*, which imposes any thing upon the *belief* of men, which is contrary to their *reason*. Now in opposition to this assertion of theirs, which they have not thought fit to qualify with any such just *limitation* as would become wise men to make; I shall make bold to lay down these two *Propositions*, in which I shall be equally positive and peremptory, but upon better grounds I am sure, and such as will justify that confidence.

First, that when we have *full and sufficient proof* of the truth of any thing, by such *clear and cogent Arguments*, as the nature of the thing proposed to our belief will bear, then we are bound to yield a firm assent to it. 2dly, After such *clear proof and conviction*, no doubts or objections, tho they contain never so many difficulties and absurdities, seemingly, which we cannot solve and answer, should be of force to *shake*, or at least not to *unsettle* our assent, and make us *alter our persuasion* of the truth of those things so proved and confirmed; I mean, except the Arguments and Objections offered to the contrary, are such, as overthrow the *proofs* upon which our former persuasion was grounded; for then we are bound to yield to the stronger Argument, and to govern our assent accordingly. But if these doubts are only such as affect the *thing* it self, when the proofs upon which it is built remain firm and unshaken, then in this case, tho the difficulties proposed may *perplex* and *puzzle* our understanding, yet for all that, the persuasion we have of the truth of those things should continue still where it was before *fixt* and unmovable.

But before I proceed further, I must crave leave to premise two or three things. As first, that no one truth can really be repugnant to, or destructive of another. Otherwise contradictions might prove true, which overthrow each other, and upon this supposition, must likewise overthrow all truth and certainty, by confounding *right* and *wrong*, and taking away the distinction between *truth* and *falsehood* out of the world.

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In pursuance of this, it must likewise be acknowledged in the *second place*, that what is really *repugnant to Reason*, cannot be *true in Religion*; nor on the other hand, what is *false in Religion* can be *agreeable to Reason*. Or in short, that there is no true opposition between *Reason*, and *Revelation*, for it is of revealed Religion that we are now speaking.

By *reason*, it will easily be supposed, that I mean that which is *pure and perfect*, free from *ignorance, prejudices and mistakes*. In this sense, it must be beyond all doubt, that no truth, be it of what sort it will, can be opposite to reason; because truth is nothing else but the *conformity* that things bear to the understanding: wherever therefore there is a *disagreement* to be found between them, there must necessarily be *error and falsehood*. Again on the other hand, *Revelation* being nothing else but the *testimony of God*, which is *infallible*, whatever is contradictory to that, must inevitably be false and erroneous.

But yet 3dly, for all this, by reason of the present *weakness and imperfection* of humane understanding, and the *vast extent*, and the *great obscurity*, which both upon that, and many other accounts, attend the *natures and properties* of things, even *material and sensible*, and much more of those that are *immaterial and infinite*; it may so come to pass, that sundry things, of the truth of which we may by good and sufficient arguments be assured, yet may carry a *seeming contrariety* to the natures of other things, not real indeed in themselves, as we said before, but however so great *as to us*, that it may absolutely puzzle and nonplus our understandings to reconcile them.

You will say, what now is to be done in this case? I answer, that we may come to the point, as before, First, that when a thing is proposed to my understanding, if it comes attended with *clear, and every way sufficient proofs*, I am bound to yield my assent. 2dly, When I am once clearly convinced, then *no objections* taken from the *nature of the things*, tho clogged with never so many difficulties, provided that they do not affect the *proofs themselves* upon which my persuasion is built, should be of that force, as to make me alter my assent. And the reason of this is plain: Because the *natures of things*, are as to us, in
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great

great measure in the dark, their *powers and properties* unknown, and therefore may be encumbered with innumerable difficulties which we cannot tell how to solve. But the *arguments* that determine our assent are *clear, evident*, and therefore so *cogent* that we cannot resist the force of them, if we will act like rational Creatures.

Now these *proofs* which are every way sufficient to convince the mind of the truth of things, and which *conviction* ought not to be shaken, or altered, by any objections whatever, may be reduced to these three heads. 1st, Our own *observation and experience*. 2^{dly}, *Clear demonstration*, deduced from certain and evident principles. 3^{dly}, *Testimony and Information* from others, of whose truth and fidelity we have no just reason to doubt.

First, as to what concerns *experience* and the *information of our senses*, here we think we arrive at that degree of certainty, that it is not possible, at least in a natural way, to have greater. All *perception* and *knowledge* begins here; the *capacity* and *faculty* is indeed antecedently in the Soul, but the first actual notices of things we have from our Senses, which are afterwards conveyed to the understanding, there to be *considered, compared, united*, or *abstracted* from each other as there is occasion. But here the foundations of knowledge are first laid, and laid with great *firmness and stability*. For if they should be liable to mistakes, then the understanding would thereby be lead into innumerable errors, and of which it could not possibly, in a natural way, extricate it self. This judgement therefore of sense about its *proper object* is certain, I mean when attended with the other requisite Conditions, of a *due medium, just distance, organs rightly disposed, &c.* in which case we give our assent to those objects, without any *mixture of doubting*, because it is without any *possibility of mistake*.

It is true indeed, our senses are liable to numberless errors, which by the assistance of reason we are able to correct; but yet it is when one, or more of those Conditions before mentioned are wanting. But upon the former supposition, the judgement of sense is *certain and infallible*, and reason it self must

must give place to it; which tho it may *raise doubts and propose objections*, yet they all vanish before it, as mists and darkness do before the heat and light of the Sun.

To come to particulars. How many difficulties are there that attend the nature of *Time*, and *Place*, and *Motion*, which are absolutely inexplicable by any humane understanding, and yet are all overuled by our *own sense* of the truth of these things. *Reason* indeed is apt to judge of things as far as they come within the compass of observation; and therefore if a thing proposed to our belief should be such as seemed to contradict the *established Laws* of nature as far as we have observed them, we might, without the imputation of pride or vanity, if the proposal came not attended with any good proof, declare such a thing, as far as we can discern, *not possible to be done*, and therefore not *fit to be believed*.

For instance, should one nakedly propose to me what I thought of a Lock of Wool, which I find hath some faint, weak *Elastick power* in it; whether that *power* could by any means be heightened to that degree, as that it should be able to raise and lift up a piece of Lead of a great weight, or that it could possibly acquire any such force, as to rend a strong glass bottle placed upon it all to pieces? I might fairly answer, that as far as I could perceive, by considering the *nature and qualitys* of these bodys; that is, the *softness, lightness, yielding nature* of the Wool on one side, together with the *weight and heaviness* of the Lead, as also the *firm and close connexion* of parts in the Glass on the other, that this could not possibly be done.

And yet by experience we are assured of the *like force*, in a more *unlikely body*, viz. the Air, which if we had not the knowledge of by Experience in the *Air-Pump*, we might reasonably judge incredible. The *softness, tenuity, lightness, yielding nature* of the Air, (which are much greater here then in the former instance; every thing in a manner of the least weight, or most inconsiderable force passing through it, without any appearing resistance,) all these would come in as unanswerable objections against it. But yet when our own
Eyes

Eyes come to be made judges, and that we see this actually done, viz. a small quantity of Air by its spring lifting up an incredible weight, and rending a glass bottle so entirely to pieces, that no hammer managed with the force of a mans hand can do it more effectually; then all *objections* against the truth of it immediately vanish. *Sense* here will do more than *Reason*; nay will prevail *against it*. For whatever *scruples* the latter may suggest, which are not easily, or not at all to be answered; yet the former perfectly vanquishes all *doubts* about the *thing*, tho it cannot solve the difficulties that attend the *manner of the Operation*.

It is true indeed, since these experiments made of later years have convinced men of the incredible both weight and spring of the Air, by which such wonderful things have bin effected, it hath put them upon enquiring after the manner how they are performed. And tho they have found out several ingenious *hypotheses*, by which they have endeavoured to explain it; yet I doubt whether the ways which they have thought on, would of *themselves* give a man full satisfaction: such as are for instance, the *texture of the Air*, which is supposed to consist of long, slender, flexible particles; together with the *Globuli Cælestes*, and the *materia subtilis* of *Des Cartes* his first Element, by the rapid motion of which, the Air is agitated and whirled round with so great a swiftnes, that its flexible particles fly asunder, and stretch themselves out, and may be expanded to that degree, that they may make a *Vortice* a thousand times as big in bulk as that which they maintained before; I say I doubt whether this or any other

I A small quantity of Air in a bladder, was expanded to that degree, that by its own spring it was able to lift up a weight tyed to the bladder of twenty eight pounds. *Boyls Continuation of New Experiments concerning the Air*, p. 23.

The pressure of a *Cylinder* of the *Atmosphere* somewhat less then three inches in Diameter, was able uncompressd, not only to sustain, but even to drive up a weight of an hundred and odd pounds, to the great wonder of the Spectators. *Id. Exper. about the Air*. p. 122.

account proposed, how ingenious soever it may be esteemed, would be satisfactory enough to support the persuasion of the mind concerning this astonishing force of the Air, did not *sense* come in to the relief of *reason*, which, I fancy, would be otherwise left under surprize and confusion, notwithstanding those curious conjectures before mentioned.

But whatever satisfaction the Learned and the Curious may receive by these enquiries; yet it is certain, that others who are perfect strangers to these speculations, who can assign no reason for this incredible force, but can think of many things which seem directly repugnant to it; yet are at perfect rest in their minds about the truth and certainty of it, being convinced by the experiment offered to their senses, which cures all doubting about it. And the like happens in innumerable other instances, in which we find the prevalence of sense in things that are *above*, and upon that very score, *against* reason likewise. For tho I will allow the truth of this distinction, *viz.* that some things are *above*, but not *contrary* to reason; which is just and warrantable in divers cases: yet in divers likewise they are the very same; because a thing, of the truth of which I may be firmly perswaded, may *surpass the comprehension of reason*, upon this account, *viz.* that it *contradicts* some other *principle* or *maxim*, of the truth of which I am also equally assured: For tho there is no *real repugnance* between two truths, as we said before, *in themselves*; yet *as to us*, it may be so great, that our reason, for want of a full comprehension of the nature of things, after all its endeavours cannot find out any way of reconciling them.

And this happens I say, in innumerable instances, of which we have clear and certain information from our senses. I shall not trouble the Reader with many, but content my self with one, which relates to the wonderful and indeed astonishing attributes of the *Loadstone*, of the truth of which we are convinced by our *sight*, tho they seem to overthrow some *commonly received* principles of reason. It is a known *maxim* received by *Naturalists*, that *vis unita fortior*. Yet if a *Loadstone* be cut to pieces, these *fragments* will take up and sustain much

much more Iron then the *entire stone* was able to do. Here tho the *experiment* contradicts the *maxim*, yet reason it self, tho a party in the case, will give sentence for the former against the latter.

Again, Let there be two bodys placed at a convenient distance, which have such *powers and qualities* whereby they may act upon each other; they will, if they be not *hindered*, accordingly do so. But if you interpose another body of a considerable *bulk and thickness* between them, that body, especially if it be *Opack* as well as *Dense*, so interposed, shall intercept their force and vertues so far, that either they shall not be able to act at all upon each other, or much more *faintly* then they did when there was nothing but the *Air* between them, which is the *common medium* thro which those *qualities* or *effluvioms* (call them which you will) are naturally conveyed. But it is otherwise in the *Magnet*. For when it is *Cap'd*, as they stile it, and so a piece of Iron is *interposed* between the stone and the body to be raised by it, it will take up a weight by *many degrees heavier* thus armed, then if it were it self *immediately applied* to the body it self. Insomuch that *Mersennus* relates, (as I am informed by Mr. *Boyl*, from whom I have taken this account of the *Loadstone*) in a Treatise of his *De Magnetis Proprietatibus*; that he had a *Loadstone* which by it self would take up but *half an ounce of Iron*, which when *Cap'd*, would lift up *ten pounds*; which exceeded the former weight *three hundred and twenty times*; which seems strange, and if it were not well attested would be incredible.

Sundry other *phenomena* there are relating to that Body, which yet are so amazing and stupendious, that did not sense and experience satisfy men of the truth of them, they would be judged impossible; as being not only *wonderful in themselves*, but seemingly *repugnant* to the *received dictates* of *Philosophy*, and the *ordinary course* of nature, as the same Learned person observes. And yet there is none who sees these *magnetical Experiments*, that entertains the least doubt or scruple of the certainty of them; which justifies the observa-

tion which I made before, of the prevalence of *sense* above and even *against reason*, which must submit to it.

But it is not only the report of *sense* which is of that force and efficacy; but *Demonstration* will do the like; which was the second *medium* or way of proving the truth of things, every way sufficient to convince the mind, and which conviction ought not to be altered by any objections, be they never so many, or ever so great. There is no man, I suppose, who will entertain any doubt of the truth of those *conclusions*, which are deduced from *clear* and *self-evident principles*, which we call *demonstration*. For if here we should be liable to mistakes, then there is an end put to all *Science*; and all methods either of confirming the truth, or confuting error by the *use of reasoning*, must be laid aside as useless and insignificant.

I will then take it for granted, that *demonstration* is one of those methods, whereby the mind is fully and clearly convinced of the truth of things; and for that very reason, no objection can be of such force as to destroy that conviction; because *no proof* can be brought which is more clear, and thereby more convincing than the former *demonstration*; which is so evident that it doth necessarily determine my assent, so that it is not in my power, as long as I retain the free use of my reason, to withhold it. The understanding, in case of *self-evident principles*, as also of *conclusions* clearly deduced from them, is as much and certainly swayed, as *sense* is by its *proper object*: so that as it is not in my power to believe a thing to be *black*, which my sight informs me is *white*; so neither can the understanding refuse to believe the before named *principles* or *conclusions* to be true. And after it is thus convinc'd, nothing can alter it. For let the Arguments and Objections that are offered on the other side, be never so *clear* and *cogent*, yet they cannot be *clearer*, and carry a *greater evidence* than the former *demonstration*, upon which my persuasion was built: and therefore it must, notwithstanding all the attempts made to shake it, remain firm and unmoveable.

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To give some instances. That *quantity is divisible in infinitum*, so that you can never resolve it into the least and last part, is that which is clearly *demonstrable* from principles which cannot be denied; and indeed it is so certain, that it is the foundation of many of the operations in *Geometry*, which necessarily suppose it: And yet for all this it is lyable to many, and those unanswerable objections. For it seems to overthrow several evident and acknowledged truths. For first, that *Bodies are finite*, sense and reason assure us; and yet the *finiteness* of matter seems scarce reconcilable to this *infinite divisibility* of it. For whatever is *finite*, must be composed of a certain determinate number of parts: otherwise if we should affirm it to contain *infinite parts*, there would be no difference between *little and great, whole and part, &c.* For where the number of *parts are equal*, as they must be where they are *infinite*, it is not easy to imagin that there should be any *difference or inequality* in the Bodies that are made up of them. And therefore upon this supposition, an *Ant* will be as big as an *Elephant*, and a *Molehill* as a *Mountain*, or if you will, as the whole *Globe of the Earth*. For we have no way of distinguishing between *little and great*, in themselves, but by the number of *parts* of which bodies are composed.

2dly, Supposing this, which one would think should be taken for granted; it seems to be equally certain, that every *body* may be resolved into the *parts* of which it is made. For there is no *number* but what comes within the compass of *Arithmetical calculation*, and thereby every *finite body* may be *Mathematically* resolved into all its parts. And as for a *Physical* division or *Local* separation, supposing that it should exceed any humane, yet it will not surpass a Divine and Omnipotent power, which is able to unty and separate all those parts, which it hath wonderfully united together. And that is sufficient for our purpose, to shew that it is *possible* to divide matter into *all*, and therefore the *least part*. These are difficulties out of which the most knowing and curious enquirers into these matters, could never yet extricate themselves: and yet for all that, are not of force to overthrow the former assurance which we have

have of the *divisibility* of quantity, deduced from *certain and infallible principles*, which therefore must remain firm and unshaken.

Again, that two lines should for ever *approach*, and yet never *meet* one another, is what puzzles and confounds the imagination to conceive; and yet is found to be certainly true in those *lines* which are called *Asymptot*, and proved to be so by clear *demonstration*.

Lastly, ever since *Euclid's* days it hath been an acknowledged truth, that the *Angle of Contact* contained between a *straight line* and the *Circumference* of any Circle which it touches, is less than the *least Angle* contained by *two straight lines*; because this Proposition is proved by *Euclid* from principles adapted to its nature. And yet what difficulties is this truth loaded with? what paradoxes and absurdities flow from it? acknowledged even by *Mathematicians* themselves (who own and assert it) to be so many, and so great, that it is as hard a matter almost to number as it is to reconcile them. Nay, the latter and greater improvements which have been made in *Geometry*, (as the Learned Professor in that Faculty here hath assured me,) are so far from *reconciling*, that they have rather *encreased* the former difficulties. For now the *Geometricians* can give you whole *Series's* of *Angles*, that any one of them can be no more compared to the next to it, than the *Angle of Contact* which *Euclid* speaks of, with a *rectilinear Angle*. Nay betwixt any two of these, they can insert as many *Angles* more as you please, without number and without end, such as that any two of these last shall differ as much from each other, as *Euclid's Angle of Contact* and a *Rectilinear* one do. We see here in a certain *Mathematical* truth, so great a *repugnance* to reason, that the more it strives to extricate it self, the more it is entangled; and instead of explaining *old doubts*, it rather perplexes the matter with *new difficulties* never to be reconciled.

The *last proof* which is sufficient to convince the mind so fully of the truth of things, that it shall not be in the power of any objections to alter it, is by *Testimony and Information* from others, of whose truth and fidelity we have no just reason to doubt.

doubt. Here indeed we ought to use all just care and caution in satisfying our selves of the *Wisdom* and *Integrity* of the witnesses; that they are such as can not be imposed on themselves, and that they will not deceive us. And of this we may arrive at a *moral certainty*, such as will put us beyond all doubt: especially if the matters of fact be attested by numbers of persons considerable for their *wisdom, caution, sincerity, piety, &c.* which puts them out of the reach of *delusion* themselves, and the *designes* of deluding others.

I need not now enlarge upon all the circumstances and qualifications requisite to constitute a *credible witness*, whose testimony will challenge our allowance and approbation. I will at present take it for granted, that there are persons so qualified, and matters of fact so attested. And this, when I am once assured of it, will create so great a *confidence*, that no *doubts* arising from the *nature of the thing* related, shall weaken, or at least not overthrow it. It need not here be said that if they should deliver *plain inconsistencies, downright impossibilities and contradictions*, that then I am not bound to give my assent. True! but then from the *qualities* abovenamed, I am sure the persons I am now speaking of, would neither believe any such things themselves, nor obtrude them on my belief. And their *Testimony* I may therefore rely upon, with as much security as I do upon my own senses. For I am as fully convinced that there is such a place as *Rome* or *Constantinople*, which I have never been at, as that there is *London* or *Oxon* which I have seen.

It is true, there is not the same *evidence in report* as there is in *sight*, but the *certainty* may be as great; at least great enough to bear down all opposition and objection against it. And this effect we find daily in the *report* of things, not only *plain* and *easy* to be believed, but of divers things likewise which we might *otherwise judge incredible*, as exceeding the ordinary course and power of nature. And there is the same reason for this, as there was in the other cases of difficulty, overruled by the *information of sense*, viz. that the *natures* of things are *abstruse* and intricate, and therefore placed out of the reach of

of the most curious and *Philosophical* enquirers. But the *Testimony* of wise and upright men, relating to things upon their own sight and knowledg, hath been allways thought a proof so plain and cogent, that all the world have allowed of it; and they who should refuse it, would justly be esteemed *obstinate fools and mad-men*. All publick and private debates, the concerns of particular men, together with the resolutions of Princes and States, are in great measure governed by it. *Care and Industry, Trade and Commerce, Peace and War, Laws and Justice, Rewards and Punishments* depend upon and are regulated by it.

On the other hand, if we should not allow of it, innumerable and unspeakable mischiefs would follow from such a *diffidence*, with relation to *particular persons, families and societies* of all sorts: It must put an end to all *Council and contrivance*: *Labour and Industry* would thereby be discouraged, *natural affection* extinguished, *Laws and Government* dissolved; and instead of *wisdom, and foresight, and prudence, and justice, and charity*, which now govern the affairs of the world; men would abandon themselves to *sloth and idleness*, resign themselves and all their concerns to the conduct of chance and fortune; and instead of *friendship and fidelity, mutual affection and confidence; distrust, hatred, jealousies and suspicions* must universally prevail.

And this our greatest *Scepticks* and *Infidels* are aware of; and therefore in matters of *humane and outward concern*, and the affairs of *civil life*, they suffer themselves to be determined by the testimony of men so qualified as before mentioned. How many strange relations have we of *Earthquakes, Inundations, Eruptions of fire, blowing up of Mountains, Hurricanes*, and other prodigious events, which yet our *Infidels*, as far as I perceive, doe not refuse to admit into their Creed, when well attested, only because they contain several amazing difficulties, which puzzle and pose their understanding to reconcile them.

Neither do I think, that upon the *single testimony* of Gilbert or Mr. *Boyl*, they would refuse to believe the strange effects of the force of the *Air*, or the powers of the *Loadstone* before mentioned, tho they had not the opportunity to make a personal

personal tryal of those things: but in this case they would judge it reasonable to trust the report of other mens senses, as well as their own. They pretend to be *Philosophers*, many of them; to dive into the secrets of nature, where they find many strange and unaccountable things, which their senses assure them the truth of, which yet their understanding cannot perfectly comprehend, and they shew no distrust. But when you come to the affairs of *Religion*, the good nature and compliance which they discovered in *Philosophick* enquiries, presently forsakes them. Here their understandings grow *stiff* and *inflexible* to these proofs, and will yield to nothing but to *evidence* and *demonstration*. Sure there must be something more at the bottom of this *infidelity*, then the bare *opposition to reason*; It is opposite to mens *Pride, Vanity, Lust, Passions*, and these overrule reason, and prevail above the clearest motives, and otherwise unanswerable grounds of assent; by which they ought to be determined, if they would act in pursuance of that *reason*, which they pretend so much to magnify. But they have their *reason* as much at command, as some men have their *Conscience*, which they can manage as they please, and make it determine *pro* or *con*, for or against, as their *Interest* or *Prejudices* shall direct.

In short it is not only a point of *wisdom*, but a *duty* likewise that we owe to our selves, to others, and indeed to mankind, to lay aside all distrust about matters of Fact, when sufficiently attested by Persons of whose *Integrity* and *Credit* we have no reason to doubt. The difficulties that attend the *natures* of the things related, should be of no weight when put into the ballance against the *Wisdom, Caution* and *Sincerity* of the witnesses by whom they are attested. Especially if they are, as we said before, considerable for their numbers as well as those other good qualities, which serve to recommend them to the affection and esteem of mankind. And this weight there is in *Testimony* purely *Humane*.

But now if we receive the witness of men, the *Testimony* of God sure must be much more prevalent. For when he speaks all the world must keep silence, not only out of *reverence* and to give attention, but out of *submission* and *obedience* to what

he reveals, which is a duty that we are indispensably obliged to, founded not only in the *veracity and wisdom* of God, but likewise in his *Sovereign Power*, who is our maker and therefore Lord of all our faculties. Upon which score he claims this *submission* as part of that *Worship* which is naturally due to him, viz. that the whole Soul and all the powers of it should stoop to his Authority, and submit to his Pleasure. So that to refuse our assent to what God hath revealed, who is not only *Infallible*, but likewise our *Lord and Sovereign*, would render us not only guilty of *Folly and Absurdity*, but likewise of *Disobedience and Rebellion*, in refusing him that submission of the understanding, which he justly claims as part of the *Allegiance* which is due to him, by vertue of the abovenamed *Sovereignty and Power*.

Neither ought we to *Capitulate* and enter into a treaty with our Maker, proposing *Terms and Conditions* upon which we are content to yield obedience to him. No, he requires an *absolute and entire submission*, without any exception or reservation whatsoever. For which reason likewise, neither will it become us to *deliberate*, or *curiously enquire* into the nature and reasons of the things thus proposed to our belief. I mean any farther than God hath thought fit to discover them to us. And therefore whatever *disagreement* there may be in those things to our *Ideas*, we must not pervert or bend the *revelation* to comply with our Notions; but our *conceptions* must stoop and bend both to the Truth and the Authority of the revealer.

It is true indeed, as in all other Testimonies we ought to employ all our care and use our utmost caution that we be not deceived, nor imposed upon by any false stories or idle reports: So God Almighty is willing, nay commands us to make use of our *reason* to enquire into the *truth of the revelation*, and to satisfy our selves of the *just meaning* of it. But when that is once done, we have no more to do but to submit and assent, and from disputing fall to worshipping.

But still our adversaries urge us with the *difficulties* which attend the *Doctrines* which are proposed to their belief, that they are *repugnant to their notions*, and therefore they cannot admit

admit them into their Creed: otherwise they might justly be charged with that *πῆσις ἄλογος*, brutish irrational Faith, which the Fathers, as we have heard before, condemned, and we thought fit to disclaim. I say there is no such danger: for supposing this *repugnance*, alledged by our adversaries in vindication of their infidelity; it will not *excuse* them. Neither can we who admit these Doctrines be said to believe *without reason*. For we have *revelation* which is the Testimony of God to justify our assent. And therefore tho' some of the Doctrines revealed in the Scriptures be seemingly *against reason*, that is, against several doubts which may be proposed, and which reason cannot answer: yet *reason* in this case will give a verdict against it self. That is, will judge it fit that we should believe the Testimony of God, against the objections proposed by our understanding.

Reason pays this deference, as we shewed before, to the Testimony of wise and good Men. And it doth it upon excellent grounds which cannot be overthrown, without overturning likewise all that is useful and valuable and sacred in the world. Let the *Evidence* of Testimony therefore be placed in opposition to the *Obscurity* that attends the nature of things, and then let every Man that hath the free use of his reason determine which should prevail.

Let no man be surprized when I say there is an *Evidence* in Testimony. For tho' being an *Extrinsecal Argument* it doth not make the *things themselves* Evident, which therefore, as to their causes and manner both of their Existence and Operations, may continue as much in the dark as they were before; yet the *Integrity, and Wisdom* of the Persons who make the report, together with the *Credibility* which arises from thence, may be as *Evident* as the matter of Fact it self related by them. It is as clear as that the Sun shines, that a company of wise and good men, so qualified as above mentioned, cannot be deceived in matters which they relate upon their own sight and knowledge; and that they can as little enter into a Combination to cheat and deceive the world. Such errors and Impositions might be expected from a Club of *Fools and*

Knaves met together. But that men *knowing* and *cautious* and *sincere*, should be engaged in any such wicked design, is *morally Impossible*; nay I had almost said *naturally* so: because this must suppose the natures of things to be changed and altered; so that there shall be no longer any distinction between *Wisdom* and *Folly*, *Caution* and *Imprudence*, *Sincerity* and *Hypocrisy*, *Righteousness* and *Injustice*; because at this rate they will all operate alike, and equally help to produce *the same* effects in the world.

But as to *things*, there is a great *obscurity*, as we shewed before that attends them, both upon the account of the vast extent of nature, and the hidden powers and properties of particular beings; as also of the mutual relation and dependence which they, as parts of the Universe, even at vast distances, may have one upon another; which renders it very difficult, and perhaps in this state of imperfection, impossible for us fully to explain them. And if in *material beings*, which we every day converse with, and which are the objects of our senses, there be so many wonders and perplexing difficulties; what may there not be in the natures and powers of *Spirits*, with which we are so little acquainted? And lastly what may there not be much more even beyond all conception and imagination, in a nature that is *Infinite*? in which there are *depths* able not only to *surprize*, but entirely to *swallow* up our understandings; so that we may be in danger of losing our selves while we dive too far in our search after such truths, placed out of the reach not only of any humane, but all Created understandings. In which case sure it is but reasonable that we should believe the report that God makes of himself, whose infinite understanding is alone *Commensurate* to his own infinite nature and perfections, and therefore as he only can know, so he only can make a full discovery of them to the world.

From hence we may infer the absurdity and folly of this practise of our *Infidels*, who refuse to admit things proposed to their *belief* upon the Testimony of Holy and *Inspired Men*, because forsooth they are placed above the reach
of

of their shallow Conceptions. Many *natural* things are so; and much more may those things be which concern *immaterial beings*; forasmuch as nothing in nature, from our observations of which we receive our first informations of things, can afford us any perfect or adequate resemblance of them.

This consideration must be of greater force, as we said before, when we extend it to what is *infinite*. For tho' we are often puzzled about *sensible objects*, and much more so about *Spirits* which are quite removed out of the reach of them; yet however there is some *proportion* between our understanding and them, which are *both* created and *both* finite. But there is none between them and what is *Infinite*, which yet is the object of our *Faith*: and therefore to expect that it should be made plain and evident, and in every regard conformable to our notions, is not only *absurd* but *impossible*. For let us *swell* and look never so big, and *stretch our Ideas* to what length we think fit, yet still we shall find that they will fall infinitely short of those divine perfections to which they are applyed; which yet being revealed we ought firmly to believe, tho' we can never fully comprehend.

By all that hath been said, I hope I have sufficiently made it appear, that that rule so much insisted upon of late, as the only true way of arriving at Knowledge and Certainty, viz. by the *agreement* or *repugnancy* that is between things and our *Ideas*, is a very deceitful and a fallacious method. Forasmuch as many things in *Art* and *Nature*, *Philosophy* and *Divinity*, which carry a seeming repugnance to right reason, and a real contrariety to many of our *Ideas*, may yet be certainly true; and which we are bound to believe so, when sufficient proof is made of the truth of them; which persuasion ought not to be altered by any doubts and difficulties attending the nature of the things themselves.

Many things of which we are perswaded are indeed *evident in themselves*, and are every way agreeable to our notions; and where they are not so, the *proofs* upon which the truth of them is built, and by which they are recommended to our assent, should have this *Connexion* and *Conformity* to our conceptions.

ceptions so much talked of. This if our Unitarians would affirm, they would say no more than what is right, and in which we should all concur. But alas this would not do them the service designed by this rule; which if it were not contrived, at least hath been carried on by our Adversaries, in order to overturn the *Doctrines* of Religion and the *mysteries of our Faith*; many of which we allow cannot be explained, nor reconciled to common and received notions. But however the *proof* on which our persuasion of divine truth is built, is every way conformable to the dictates of right reason, *viz.* *Divine Revelation*, which is nothing else but the *Testimony of God*, which ought to be submitted unto without scruple and without exception.

If doubts and exceptions taken from the *nature of things* themselves would be a sufficient ground to justify our infidelity, with relation to the *Articles of Faith*; it would for the same reason overthrow the *certainty of sense* and the *truth of demonstration* in many things, as we heard before; which yet these men, as great admirers as they are of their own *Ideas*, are not so hardy as to deny. The consent of mankind would be sufficient to bear down not only the denial, but even the doubting of those things; and they could never be able to bear the reproach and infamy of such a piece of *Scepticism*, in which they would find every body their enemy. But they may make more bold with *Religion*, *plaudente orbe*, not only with impunity, but with commendation and applause. For whatever *right reason* may suggest in behalf of *Faith*, yet mens *Lusts*, *Passions*, *Pride*, *Prejudice and Interests* will all come in to the assistance of *infidelity*, which by sad experience, we find daily to get ground, and gain Proselytes, to the great scandal of our Church and Nation.

By these means *Infidelity* prevails, and not by the force of reason, and tho that is pretended, it is but a pretence; for when things come closely to be examined, it is found that our *Infidels* cannot justify themselves in their opposition to the truths of the Gospel, but by the most absurd and irrational *Apology* in the world, which we have so often before mentioned, *viz.* upon the account of the seeming or real difficulties, take

which you will, that attend the *natures of the things* offered to their belief; when yet those very things are proposed to us, by *clear and undoubted*, nay which is more, by *infallible testimony*, viz. that of God himself, which sure is sufficient, if any thing can be so, to determine our assent, in spite of all objections whatsoever. And this we still appeal to; and which they themselves when urged with it, dare not deny; as being the only true issue to which all these Controversies relating to the doctrines of Faith ought to be brought, and by which they ought ultimately to be tryed.

If they should decline the authority of the Holy Scriptures, then they might justly be reputed *Atheists*, and therefore would be driven from the company of Christians, as such who had renounced the Christian Religion, which is only to be found in those Inspired Writings. But to avoid the *infamy* of such a charge, they pretend to own and to be concluded by them. I shall for the Readers information produce the sayings both of the *Antient and Modern Unitarians* to this purpose, where they speak fully and home to the point, and which if they would abide by, this whole controversy about *Reason* in the affairs of *Religion* would soon be at an end.

I shall begin with *Socinus* their Ringleader and Patriarch, who when it is for his purpose can speak in as lofty a strain of the perfection and authority of the Holy Scriptures, as any the most Orthodox person whatsoever. Hear therefore what he saith of them upon this occasion¹. "We who profess our
" selves

¹ *Nostrum est, qui Christianos nos esse profiteamur fundamenta & principia Christianæ Religionis, id est, libros veteris & novi Testamenti, non modo constantissime retinere, sed in illis legendis & pensitandis diligentissimos esse. In quibus, si quid non uno aut altero in loco, sed ubique clarissimis verbis contestatum deprehendimus, nihil prorsus dubitandum quin id verissimum sit, quicquid hujus sæculi sapientia suadeat. Alioqui si vel ex hominum autoritate, vel sensu nostro in rerum divinorum cognitione pendere ulla ratione voluerimus, hæcque apertissimis spiritus sancti testimoniis opponere, facile fiet, quemadmodum experientia hodie nos plus satis docet,*

“selves Christians, ought constantly to retain, and diligently to
 “peruse the Books of the Old and New Testament. In which
 “if we find any doctrine, which is constantly and in clear ex-
 “pressions delivered there, we ought to entertain no doubts
 “of the truth of it, whatever the *wisdome of this world* may
 “suggest to the contrary: otherwise if in our search, and for
 “our information of divine truths, we depend either upon the
 “*authority of men*, or our *own sentiments* and apprehensions, and
 “oppose these to the express declarations of the Holy Ghost, it
 “may easily come to pass, that thereby men will by degrees
 “fall into a neglect of all Religion; and the Holy Scriptures
 “in time come to be esteemed trifles, and the Sacred History
 “accounted only a meer *Fable and Romance*. Here *Socinus*
 proved a true Prophet, for what he foretold we find ex-
 actly verified in our Age.

Nay, he cannot only *magnify the Scriptures*, but likewise,
 when it is for his purpose, *depreciate reason*, and extreme-
 ly undervalue it, when put in opposition to those Holy Writ-
 ings, as an uncertain and therefore insignificant thing. For
 when *Christian Francken*, in a Disputation concerning the *Ado-
 ration* of our Saviour, “tells *Socinus*, that he would appeal
 “to *reason* as the proper judge of this Controversy, and not
 “to *Scriptures*, which might be distorted and turned every
 “way as men pleased: He answers, that the Scriptures in ma-
 “ny things are so plain that they cannot be wrested and per-

*docet, ut sensim in omnem pietatis neglectum prolabamur, & divina omnia
 oracula pro nugis, universamque sacram historiam pro fabulis propemodum
 habeamus. Socin. in Epil. Solut. Scrupulorum. p. 333. Tom. I.*

I *Non disputabo tecum sacræ Scripturæ testimoniis*, inquit *Francken*,
*quæ detorqueri possunt, atque adeo nunc ab omnibus, etiam absurdissimis
 sectariis detorquentur; sed agam ratione si placet. Resp. Socin. plurima
 sunt testimonia Sacræ Scripturæ, quæ minime detorqueri possunt, nec à
 quoquam detorquentur. Ad quæ tanquam ad certa quædam principia
 omnis disputatio tandem redigitur, si modo de Sacræ Scripturæ autoritate
 nihil dubitatur. At vero si rationem tantum spectes, paucissima omnino
 sunt principia certa, eaque sæpiissime ab eo de quo disputatur tam longe ab-
 sunt, ut vix unquam disputando ad illa perveniri possit.*

“verted

“verted to a contrary meaning. And therefore, that all Con-
 “troversies in Religion ought to be brought to them, as to
 “certain fixed and stable principles, by which alone they can
 “clearly be decided. But as for Reason, that is a slippery and
 “fallible rule; there being but very few principles of it which
 “are certain; and those that are so, are so remote from the
 “thing in debate, and so often mistaken and misunderstood by
 “the Disputants on both sides, that they scarce ever arrive at
 “any certainty by the use of them. Who can express himself
 more pertinently and fully upon this subject?

The same ample acknowledgments you may find all along
 made by his Disciples and Followers. “Let *Franzius* shew
 “us where his opinions are declared in the Holy Scriptures,
 “and then we will receive them as certain and undoubted, *etsi*
 “*rationem superent*, allthough they surpass our Reason, saith
Smalcus. That is something but not enough. For tho our U-
 nitarians sometimes, as we heard before, laid the stress of the
 Controversie upon this point, that nothing is fit to be believed,
quod rationis captum excedit; yet being pressed with the absurdity
 of that assertion, they have quitted it, and affirm that our Arti-
 cles are not only *above* but *contrary* to reason. Well! supposing
 it be so, what is to be done in this case, provided, I mean, that
 those articles are to be found in Scripture! why if you refer it
 to *Schlichting*. he will determin for *Scripture* against *Reason*;
 and he builds his determination upon this solid foundation, *viz.*
 “That the declarations of Scripture are more certain than the

1 *Ostendat nobis Franzius ex sacris literis suas opiniones, & nos eas
 pro certis accipiemus, etsi rationem nostram superent.* Smal. Contra Fran.
 p. 165.

2 *Credendum Scripturam omni humana ratione certiore esse. Si
 Scripturam quidpiam continere constet, quicquid tandem ratio contradicat
 falli eam necesse est.* Schlichting. Contra Misn. p. 78. *Cuncta in Dei
 verbo revelata credenda esse, licet id omnis humana ratio damnet, omnis sa-
 pientia hujus seculi pro impossibili habeat; seque etiam Dei verbo plusquam
 omnibus omnium hominum rationibus credere, eo quod sciat, Dei verbo non
 nisi falsam & erroneam opponi scientiam,* Id. p. 6.

“deductions of Reason; or if you please, that the wisdom of
 “God ought to prevail above the wisdom of the world; and
 “therefore whatever is revealed in Scriptures ought to be be-
 “lieved, tho Reason denys, or contradicts, and offers never so
 “many specious arguments to justify that contradiction; for
 “nothing can be opposite to Revelation but error and igno-
 “rance; or, if it hath the shew of knowledge, it must be science
 “falsly so called.

This he repeats over and over, even in that very Treatise which he wrote against *Meisner*, in which all his arguments against the Trinity, are taken from this Topick, viz. That it is contrary to the apprehension of reason. This one might justly wonder at, and this our Author was aware of, and therefore to relieve the surprize of his Reader, he craves leave to explain himself. “when in matters of Faith, faith he, we are charged by “our Adversaries, with consulting reason, before we have re- “course to the Scriptures; they very much wrong us. For we “never make use of our Reason, but only in doubtful cases, and “to find out the true meaning of them. But in matters that are “plain and clearly revealed, there we never oppose our own “imagination against the word of God: for if reason in this “case contradicts, we are sure it is mistaken. In matters to be “believed we entirely submit to the authority of Scripture, “which is the only rule of Faith, and proper judge of Contro- “versies in Religion.

I doubt not but the Reader who is not conversant in their

I Quod ait Meisnerus, ut si dubitem de quodam themate, an sit cre-
 dendum, non primo ad morem Photinianorum consulendum esse rationem,
 sed primum confugiendum esse ad Scripturam; in eo nobis injuriam facit,
 neque nos ad rationem concurrimus quoties scriptura contrarium aperte
 testatur, sed quoties de scriptura mente dubitatur. p. 63. Cum agitur de
 rebus clarissimis in scriptura consignatis & expressis, dicimus non rationem,
 sed solam scripturam normam esse: si vero agatur de rebus obscuris, de qui-
 bus merito dubitari queat an in scripturis significatæ legantur, sine ratione
 rem non confici posse. Quæ tamen non in id adhibenda sit, quasi scripturæ
 aliquid affirmanti aut neganti opponi possit; sed tantum ad declarandum
 an quidpiam scriptura contineat vel non contineat: si continere constat,
 quicquid tandem ratio contradicat, falli eam necesse est. p. 68.

writings

writings, will stand amazed at these expressions, in which are contained so many, and such Orthodox acknowledgments of the truth and authority of Divine Revelation, even in things *above and against reason*, which yet is the great Engine that they, upon all occasions, make use of to overturn it. One would wonder where the difference between them and us lay. Do we magnify the *clearness and perspicuity* of the holy Scriptures in all things necessary to Salvation? so do they. Do we own their *authority and submit to it*? so do they. Do we give them the *preference to reason*, and seeing they are the *sole rule* of our belief, do we judge it fit to *captivate our understandings to the obedience of Faith*? so do they. For we must give our assent to the Scriptures, say they, *contra propriæ mentis, & rationis judicium*. And again we are bound to believe what is revealed, *licet id omnis humana ratio damnet, omnis sapientia hujus sæculi pro impossibili habeat*.

No men can say more upon this subject, and yet no men can believe less then our Unitarians do of it. For notwithstanding this seemingly frank and really full Declaration which they make, they do not believe one word of all this to be true. This may be thought a severe charge; but it is as plain as that the Sun shines at noon day. For let any man but open his eyes and peruse their writings, and then he need not take any great pains, or use any great application of thought, nicely to scan and compare the several passages of their books in order to find out these *Contradictions*. They follow so thick and so close one upon the heels of another, that the Reader, if he be not extream drouzy and nods at every turn, cannot but take notice of them.

To instance in some particulars. Did not Socinus tell Francken, as we heard before, "that the expressions of Scripture were
"some of them so plain and evident, that men neither could
"nor durst pervert them. That they were the only cer-
"tain principles, by which all our disputes about Religion
"ought to be regulated? and yet doth not the same man

1 *Id. ibid. p. 101.*

tell us with relation to the words of St. Paul¹ Rom. 7. 14. that *quantacunque vis verbis Pauli adhibenda est*, we may use any the greatest force to them, rather then admit them according to the obvious sense and sound of the words. I am not concerned here to oppose Socinus his Exposition of this place; but only to shew that notwithstanding his former declaration, he thinks he may lawfully use force and pervert the words of Scripture, when he cannot otherwise reconcile them to his own opinion.

Again, doth not Crellius² openly declare, That if we could prove the Doctrine of the Trinity, and the other Mysteries of our Religion by clear and evident Testimonies of Scripture, that then he would give way and submit to us? And yet doth not Socinus³ affirm the quite contrary, that tho we found it recorded in Scripture, idque clarissimis verbis, in the clearest expressions imaginable: that Christ bore the punishment of our sins, yet he would not believe it? Doth not Schlicht.⁴ assure us, of himself and his friends, that they are extremely injured, when it is laid to their charge, that they require men first to consult their reason before they search the Scriptures about the truth of those

¹ Epist. 2^{da} ad Johan. Balcermicium Oper. Tom. 1. p. 425.

² Cedendum esset iis hominibus (scil. qui clamant mysterium hoc esse, quod credendum sit non scrutandum, rationem ista non capere, in sacris literis esse acquiescendum) si perspicuis sacrarum literarum testimoniis dogma istud probarent. Crell. De uno Deo patre Lib. 1. Sect. 3. Cap. 16. Si dogma hoc (de Trinitate) sacrarum literarum autoritate niteretur, quicquid tandem rationi adversaretur, se pro vero agniturum fuisse Schlicht. contra Meisn. p. 65. Nonne Scripturæ testimonium à vobis petimus, hoc convicti protinus cedimus, ibid. p. 80.

³ Nec si ubique clarissimis verbis testatum reperiremus, (scil. in Christo delicta nostra fuisse punita,) sic tamen rem se habere nobis compertum esset. Socin. de Christo Serv. par. 3. cap. 2. p. 194. Quare nequeo satis mirari quid illis in mentem venerit, qui nobis primi istam nobis satisfactionem fabricarunt, cum ea quæ fieri non posse aperte constet, divina etiam Oracula ea facta fuisse in speciem diserte attestantibus, nequaquam admittantur. Id. Ibid. Cap. 6. p. 204.

⁴ Contra Meisn. p. 68.

things which are offered to their belief; because they never make use of reason, except it be to find out the meaning of obscure and doubtful passages; but in those that are plain and clear, they make no opposition, but presently submit, and acknowledge the truth and certainty of the Revelation, as we heard before. And yet doth not the same man tell Meisner¹ that he will not allow him the Benefit of his Clergy, nor shall he have any recourse to the Scriptures, till he hath appeared before the Tribunal of reason, and there is tried and acquitted. Nay, if any Doctrine appear to be against reason,
² Confestim explodendum est, it is presently and without any farther delay to be exploded, and not so much as allowed to appear at the bar of the Scriptures.

Before indeed he told us that the Scriptures were the only rule of Faith and Judge of Controversies: But now he hath changed his note. Reason is that supreme Tribunal, before which all Doctrines of Religion are to appear, there to be Arraigned, Censured, Acquitted or Condemned as that unerring Judge shall determine, and from whose sentence there lies no appeal.

The passages which I have hitherto cited upon this subject, have been taken out of the writings of the *Forreign Socinians*, with whom our *English Hereticks*³ exactly agree, both in their commendations and disparagement, that is, in all their contradictions about the Scriptures, when compared with humane reason. They must preserve a seeming reverence for the Bible, otherwise as I said before, they might justly be reputed *Deists* or *Atheists*; which at present it is not for their Interest

¹ *Non ante Meisnerum ad Scripturæ Tribunal dimitemus, quam prius coram sanæ & apertæ rationis judicio causam dixerit & absolutus fuerit.* p. 127. *Itaque Meisnerus non ante ad verbi divini auctoritatem aditum sibi aperire potest, quam Socini argumenta ex ratione petita dissolvat.* p. 85.

² *Cur si contradictio deprehensa fuerit, confestim explodendum non est (dogma scil. de Trinitate) & ad Scripturæ Tribunal ne admittendum quidem?*

³ See Lett. of Resolution, p. 1. Confid. of the Explic. of the Trin. p. 31. Answer to the Bp. of Worcester, p 19. Trinitarian Scheme, p. 27.

to be accounted. For tho they may not judge that Character so *infamous* as formerly it hath been reputed; yet however it may hinder their designs against the Christian Religion, which they cannot so effectually undermine, as under the *profession* and *disguise* of Christians. And *Reason* is the instrument that must be made use of to this blessed purpose; which is their beloved Principle, and to which in the affairs of Religion they make their *Dernier resort*. Let the *Holy Writings*, and the *Holy Spirit* which indited them say what they will, this must be their great Oracle which in all difficult cases they chiefly consult, and whose determinations they are resolved to abide by. In short, all Doctrines must be tryed by it, and according to their agreement or repugnance to it, they must finally be admitted or rejected. The *absurdity* of which method, and how *irrational* and *unphilosophical* it is, I have endeavoured to make out in the foregoing papers.

I must now come to shew the *Impiety* of it, which (in pursuance of the method laid down in the former part, when I discours'd of the necessity of Faith) I shall shew with relation to those three particulars there mentioned, which are, or at least should be the dearest to us, as being of the nearest concern, and therefore of the highest importance to us of any thing in the world.

The first is the *Perfection and Authority of the Holy Scriptures*.

2dly, The *Honour and Reputation of our Blessed Saviour and his Apostles*, together with the other *Inspired Writers*.

And Lastly, The *Truth and Certainty of the Christian Religion*: all which are dangerously invaded by this method, viz. of bringing Revealed Truths to the bar of Reason, there to be Examined and Censured; and which, if it should prevail, would in time be thereby totally subverted.

And first of the Holy Scriptures, whose Inspiration and Authority by this method is clearly undermined.

But before I proceed to shew the unspeakable mischiefs, which attend this practice with relation to the Scriptures;

I must

muſt crave leave to give the Reader an account of thoſe *rules*, which *Socinus* and his Followers have laid down for the Interpretation of them, in order to avoid the force and conviction which ariſes from the words and expreſſions to be found there, in which are plainly contained the *Mysteri*es of our Holy Faith, ſo much and ſo earneſtly contended for by us, and ſo vehemently impugned by them. By which all the world may ſee how much they diſtruſt the goodneſs of their cauſe, when it comes to be tryed by this Canon. For ſince they dare not decline this tryal, nor can they well tell how either to *bribe or corrupt their Judge, viz.* The Holy Spirit ſpeaking in his word; they will however if it be poſſible *pervert his Sentence*. To this purpoſe they will call in the aſſiſtance of their wit and malice, which they call their reaſon, which tho' they cannot (as the caſe ſtands) employ to *overthrow* the Holy Writings *directly*, yet they hope they may be allowed to make uſe of it in order to *Explain and Interpret* them, which to be ſure they will do in ſuch a manner, as may render the Teſtimony of Scriptures as uſeleſs and inſignificant as is poſſible.

And firſt, When we produce the *plain, poſitive, direct* affirmations of Scripture, and thereby endeavour to prove the Divinity, for Inſtance, of our Saviour; or the efficacy and merit of thoſe ſufferings which he underwent in our room and ſtead; in order to elude the force of thoſe expreſſions, it will be ſufficient, they ſay, to ſhew that the words are *capable* of another conſtruction, and that it is *poſſible* they may be taken in another ſenſe.

Now can any thing be uttered, which is more repugnant to that *reaſon* which theſe men ſet in oppoſition to *Revelation*, then this *rule* laid down by them, which tends plainly to overthrow the whole uſe of *reaſoning* in the affairs of Religion, and indeed in every thing elſe? For the great end of argumentation being, by proper *mediums*, to convince the underſtanding of the truth or falſhood of things; in this caſe, what appears to be *neceſſary* and therefore *certain*, muſt prevail above what is only *probable*; and among *probabilitys* where

where there are several degrees, the greater probability must overrule the less: and any the least degree of it must take place above what is only possible. Because what is only probable, induit rationem falsi, hath the notion of false, when put in opposition to what is certainly true; and so hath what is barely possible, when compared with what is likely and probable. And therefore in this case, as the understanding is necessarily determined to give a firm assent to what appears to be certain, so is it obliged to believe what is probable, before what is only possible, that is, to assent to what is verisimile, or hath a great affinity and likeness to truth, before that which carries no resemblance to it.

Otherwise the mind might equally accept or refuse truth or falshood with a like indifference, which is destructive of the nature and the formal notion of the understanding, which hath truth alone for the object of its assent. And yet this wise rule is laid down by our Adversaries (which would be an effectual method to destroy all truth and certainty in other cases) as the best way of interpreting, and thereby, finding out the truth of the Holy Scriptures. Nothing occurring more frequently in the Writings of these men, then these and the like expressions, *Potest hic locus ita accipi, Potest hæc vox aliter intelligi. Sufficit quod vox illa plures admittat significationes.*

Thus Smalcus in his Refutation of *Franz*. tells him, *satis est*, it is sufficient for me, saith he, *that the words may be otherwise read and understood, and that another sense, be it what it will, may be contained under them, rather then that which our Adversaries contend for.* These and the like expressions may be found in several places of his Writings So that at this rate, any unusual, remote, far-fetched sense, tho sought out of the *Talmud*, or *Alcoran*, or any other pernicious Book, provided it be possible, will be sufficient to overthrow the true meaning of the Scriptures. Unhappy men! plainly delivered up

¹ *Satis est docuisse verba illa aliter legi posse, & proinde alium sensum, quicumque tandem ille sit, in illis contineri, quam is est quem adversarii ei affingunt.* Smalc. Cont. Franz. p. 27. & alibi passim.

Now what Smalcus simply affirms, Joachim Stegman endeavours to prove to be a reasonable way of proceeding, but he doth it in such a manner, that it is not easy to determine, whether the *assertion*, or the *argument* by which he endeavours to confirm it, be the more ridiculous. It is worth while to hear what he saith upon this occasion.

In all disputations the Opponents consequence is supposed to be necessary, because the Contradictory or Opposite Proposition to it is false: a very weak and absurd inference, as I shall shew by and by. But to proceed. We account that necessary, quod aliter se habere non potest; which cannot be otherwise; what therefore may be otherwise, is not necessary. This inference is very plain, and which no body in his right wits can doubt of. But what then! why then it must follow, saith he, *that if I can shew that my Opponents consequence is not necessary, at the same time I shew that his conclusion is not rightly deduced from the premisses, and therefore must be false.* Now can any thing be uttered more inconsistent, as I said but just now, with the rules of *Logick* and the dictates of that reason, whose *Prerogative* in the affairs of Religion he endeavours to assert in this treatise? what! is there no *truth* but what is a *necessary truth*; no *proof* but *strict and proper demonstration*? If he had said that when the *premisses* are *false*, the *conclusion* cannot be *true*: Or that when they are only *probable*, the *conclusion*, which allways follows *partem debiliorem*, cannot be *necessary*, he had said that which was very right, but yet nothing at all to his purpose. But to say that what is

I Sunt qui acerbiori sarcasmo solent hoc responsum accipere; egregia ratio! Verba alio modo accipi possunt, Ergo debent, Ergo hoc modo non possunt. Cui sic respondet. Opponentis consequentia statuitur necessaria, cuius nimirum contradictoria falsa sit. Necessarium autem est, quod aliter se habere non potest. Ergo quod aliter se habere potest, non est necessarium. Ostenso autem, opponentis consequentiam non esse necessariam, illius conclusionem exinde non recte colligi, sequitur. Libello de Iudice & norma Controv. fidei, Cap. 8.

not necessarily true must be certainly false, is to destroy the very notion of probability, and with it the greatest part of that knowledge which mankind is possessed of, in this state of imperfection, where we see but in part, and know but in part.

In short, a thing that is not absolutely necessary, may yet be highly probable, which is sufficient to determine every wise mans assent, till it be overruled by some more clear and cogent argument: otherwise we must be in a state of suspense and doubting, not only in *Philosophick inquiries*, but in many *affairs of Civil life*, and those of the highest importance, about which men govern their Counsels and Resolutions by prudent and probable rules and informations, and in which we cannot allways arrive at an absolute certainty, which excludes all possibility of the contrary: and yet every man is bound to act in pursuance of those *verisimilitudes* or *likelyhoods*; otherwise he might justly be reputed a perverse, obstinate fool. We see what miserable shifts our adversaries are forced to make use of, the weakness of which, any man possessed of common sense, tho unacquainted with the artificial rules of argumentation, may at first view easily see, and therefore justly laugh at. *Unhappy men! plainly delivered up to a reprobate mind; so hardly are they convinced of the truth, so easily confirmed in their errors.*

2dly. When we produce the plain words and expressions of Scripture, if those words contain a doctrine that is repugnant to their reason, they say in this case it is lawful to *wrest and pervert* them to another meaning, quite contrary to what the natural construction of them would direct us to. You may bend and turn them which way you will, like a Nose of Wax, to which the *Papists* have sometimes impiously compared those holy Writings; and if they will not easily yield, but should prove stubborn and refractory, then you may use violence, nay, *quantacunque vis adhibenda est*, as we heard before from *Socinus*; any the *greatest force* may be made use of to compell them to submit to your pleasure. You may put your wits on the rack first, and then bring the Scriptures there, which you may stretch and torture as you think fit, and thereby oblige them

them to speak as you would have them. In short, from the natural you may fly to a figurative¹ construction, and if ordinary figures will not serve the turn, you may call in to your assistance Tropos inusitados, any the most uncommon and unusual Tropes, and thereby as we said before, compel them to comply with your conceptions.

3dly. When this cannot be done (if it be possible to find out or imagin any such case) but that the words will stare them in the face, and put them so far out of countenance, that they cannot well tell how to pervert their meaning; they have one shift still left, and that is, that we are not obliged to acquiesce in the bare words or meaning of the Inspired Writers, but may require them to produce their reasons for what they say. For we are not to be oppressed with naked authority, but we may exact clear proofs even from Prophets and Apostles, and that not only of their Mission, but likewise of their Affirmations, otherwise you may lawfully withhold your assent. Nay it is no less then strict² and proper demonstration that will serve their turn: *Quod probandum est,*
per

¹ Credimus, etiamsi non semel atque iterum, sed satis crebro & apertissime scriptum extaret, Deum esse hominem factum, quia hæc res sit absurda, & sanæ rationi plane contraria, multo satius esse modum aliquem dicendi comminisci, quo ista de Deo dici possint, quam ista simpliciter ut verba sonant intelligere, & ita sanctissimam Christi Religionem pro turpissima omnibus ridendam proponere Smalc. Hom. 8^{va} in 1 Cap. Joh. Cum ea, quæ fieri non posse aperte constet, divinis etiam Oraculis ea facta fuisse in speciem diserte attestantibus, nequaquam admittantur, & idcirco sacra verba in alium sensum quam ipsa sonant, per inusitados Tropos quandoque explicentur. Ego quidem etiamsi non semel sed sæpe id in monumentis sacris scriptum extaret, scil. Christum pro peccatis nostris divinæ justitiæ satisfecisse, non tamen idcirco rem prorsus ita se habere crederem ut vos opinamini, Socin. de Christo Serv. p. 3. Cap. 6.

² Sic Deus benignissimus salutem nostram per Christum procuravit, ut quicumque ea quæ Christus dixit & fecit firmiter crediderit, eum tanta bona consequi prorsus sit necessarium, & porro de iis non dubitare quæ ad ea consequenda scire omnino oporteat, non modo quia ipse Deus dixerit, verum etiam quia ipsorum veritas per se, quoad ejus fieri potest, appareat. Imo

per causas aut effecta propria ita se habere demonstratur. In short, you are not obliged to believe a thing to be true barely because God hath said it, *sed quia verum apparet, id Deum dixisse nobis certo persuadeamus*, as Socinus very piously determines this point. So that according to the method prescribed by the *Blasphemer*, you must first be assured of the truth of the thing proposed to your belief, and then if you find it in the Scripture, you may be allowed to think that God hath spoken it, otherwise you are at your liberty.

It is true indeed, you may hereby be thought to derogate from the *authority of Prophets and Apostles*, nay of the *Holy Spirit* by whose direction they spake; but that is but a trifle in comparison of the advantage which we reap by these means, *viz.* that hereby we assert the dignity of our nature, and the preeminence of our understanding, which should be dearer to, and therefore should prevail more with us, than any other considerations whatsoever.

Now there is nothing that can be uttered or conceived, which tends more to the defamation of the Holy Scriptures than *these rules*, which they have thus laid down for their *Interpretation*; and they had ten times better have plainly and roundly *denied their authority*, and for that reason have refused all *Appeal* to them, then after such pretended respect, to make use of such a method of expounding them, as tends so highly to their disgrace and disparagement. As ² *Plutarch*

inde potissimum Deus se ea locutum fuisse constare voluit, quod vera esse deprehenderentur, Socin. de Chr. Servatore par. 3. cap. 2. p. 195. Respondeo, neque Christum sic unquam dixisse (scil. se penas universas peccatis nostris debitas persoluturum) neque si maxime dixisset, resurrectionem suam id ea ratione comprobaturam fuisse quam nos hoc loco quaerimus. Non enim generalem istam comprobandi rationem quaerimus, quia scil. eum, qui dixit, istiusmodi esse appareat ut mentiri, non possit: sed singularem quandam, qua id nominatim, quod comprobandum est, per causas aut effecta propria ita se habere demonstratur: Adeo ut non modo, quia Deum ipsum dixisse appareat, id verum esse constet; sed etiam quia verum esse appareat, id Deum dixisse nobis certo persuadeamus. Id. ibid. cap. 4. p. 199.

2. Thei dicitur:

observes

observes of the *Superstitious man*, that in some sense he is more injurious to *God* than the *Atheist*: it being a less dishonor to be thought and declared not to be, than to be accounted a *Cruel, Revengeful, Malicious, Proud, Unjust person*, which are the Ideas that *superstition* forms of a Deity. This will be made good by a consideration of these following particulars.

First this *Socinian* method of interpreting Scripture directly undermines their *authority*, by taking away all distinction between them and common Writings. For if *reason* be only to be respected, then whoever brings that, hath an equal right to our attention and regard. If this be the only perfection that adorns, this the only divine spirit that animates these Holy Books, then tho we should allow their *truth*, we should have no reason to reverence their *authority*, which would hereby be intirely subverted, and they put upon the same level with those writ by *Aristotle and Plato*. Nay because that *strict demonstration*, which *Socinus*, as we heard before, required, viz. by *proper causes and necessary effects*, is not allways to be found in the Scriptures, they cannot deserve to be placed in the same rank, as coming far short, and being much inferior, in this case, to the compositions of *Euclide and Archimedes*.

But this is not all, we must rise higher and affirm, that by this method our adversaries do not only supplant the *authority*, but even the *truth* of the Scriptures, which affirm of themselves that they were given by *inspiration of God*, and that the *Holy men who spake in them were moved thereunto by the Holy Ghost*. Now if this be true, it puts an end to all farther inquiries after other arguments and reasons for our assent; because the *Spirit of God*, who is likewise the *Spirit of Truth*, who will not lye and cannot be deceived, hath discovered and revealed these matters, and consequently his Testimony must not only be *equal*, but *superior* to all other proof, how evident or certain soever it may be.

That which follows from hence is this, that when our *Unitarians* do declare themselves not content with the *positive affirmations* of Scripture, but require further *proof and demonstration*; either first, that they do not really believe the Scrip-
tures

tures to be the *word of God*; because if they did, they would not only allow them to be *true*, but likewise reverence them as *Sacred and Infallible*, which would exclude all other enquiries, and would leave neither room nor occasion for farther proof. Or else *2dly*, they must *say*, what another would not without horror and trembling *think of*, viz. that the *holy Spirit* might either thro' *weakness and ignorance* be deceived himself, or thro' *malice or design* be willing to deceive us. The first of which being opposite to his *infinite knowledge*, and the other to his *infinite goodness and veracity*, to affirm any such thing must not only be a dishonor, but likewise the highest *Blasphemy* that can be conceived or uttered against him either by Men or Devils. Nay I think I should wrong the *Devil* if I should lay any such desperate calumny to his charge. For whatever he may suggest to other weak and wicked men, yet I believe he hath not the hardyness and impudence to blaspheme the Spirit of God, and to spit his venom in his face as some execrable *Infidels* have done. For he too well knows, and to his sorrow is sufficiently convinced of the infinite and unerring wisdom of God, and his unchangeable truth, which he *firmly believes*, and believing *trembles* with unexpressible amazement at the thought of it.

2dly. Forasmuch as one of the greatest excellencies of the holy Scriptures is it's *clearness and perspicuity* in those things which it recommends to our *faith and practise*, if this method of interpreting them be allowed, the Bible will be found to be one of the most *difficult, obscure, enigmatical* books that ever was penned. It must not be denied but that there are several *figurative* words and expressions dispersed here and there, and to be found in all parts of the *Bible*: but these are for the most part common and usual, such as are to be found in all other writings; and indeed are generally adopted into daily discourse, making up a part of our common language, which therefore are as well understood as any the *plainest and properest* expressions: so that no man of ordinary parts and Education is in danger to be mislead by them.

Besides these, it must be acknowledged that there are several
passages

passages in it, which are *abstruse, intricate, hard to be understood*. Such, for instance, are several of the Prophecies of the *Old and New Testament*, which the Spirit of God thought fit to dictate in *unusual figures, in sublime and lofty expressions*, which have not only exercised, but puzzled the wits of the most knowing and learned in all Ages to give a satisfactory account of many of them. But for other matters upon which the salvation of men depends, such as are the *matters of faith and duty*, which we are bound explicitly to *believe* and conscientiously to *practise*; here we have all the reason in the world to imagine, that they should be delivered in such plain, easy, obvious expressions, as might be suited to the meanest and most ordinary capacities. They should be written in such large and legible Characters *that he who runs might read them*. The reason of which is very obvious; *viz.* because these things are of *universal concern*, and withal of the *highest consequence*, upon which, as I said, our eternal welfare depends; and therefore every man ought to be clearly and fully instructed in them.

But even here, if our adversaries are to be credited, such a *figurative and mystical meaning* is couched under the *plainest expressions*, as render the Scripture the most *obscure and mystical book* in the whole world; so that one would be tempted to imagine that it was not the *Spirit of God*, by whose direction the Scriptures, as they themselves assure us, were penned, but rather by that *old Serpent* who was surnamed *λογιστας*, by reason of his doubtful crafty answers, framed in such *oblique and ambiguous expressions*, as that they might be expounded and turned which way you pleased.

The same *obliquity* you may find in these *Christian Oracles*, if you rely upon the Unitarian expositions; for according to them you will meet here with nothing *straight and plain*, nothing *open and sincere*; but on the other hand every thing will appear *crooked and uneven, doubtful and ambiguous*, and a certain vein of *deceit and equivocation* will be found to run thro' the whole body of these writings. So that, by this account, one would think that the *Heathen and Christian Priests* were animated by the same Spirit, the *Oracles* both of the one and the other

other being delivered in the same doubtful expressions, and with the same evil design.

It is sufficiently known with what vehemence and virulence these Infidels traduce our holy Religion, upon the account of those *adorable mysteries* which it proposes to our *Faith*; which are the great ornaments of it, as well as the peculiar marks and characters, whereby it is both distinguished and advanced above all other Religions whatsoever. But these are traduced and vilified by them with the utmost scurrility, and laden with the heaviest calumnies, that wit heightened with malice could invent: because forsooth they are such as are placed above the *reach and comprehension of natural reason*. Now if this be a fault, that our Religion as to some parts of it is *mystical*, these men must be inexcusable in laying it to our charge, because they themselves must come under the same and a much heavier condemnation. For by making a *figurative* and *obscure* meaning to lye hid under the *plainest*, and *easiest* expressions of Scripture; they are found to be the promoters of a *Mystical, Incomprehensible* sort of Divinity, which none can unfold but themselves, as the Pagan Priests of old only could the mysteries of their impious rites and fables. So that what they falsely say of the *Articles of our Faith*, may justly be affirmed of their *interpretations of Scripture*, viz. that they are *Hieroglyphical and Egyptian all over*.

That I may not be thought to injure them, I shall lay before the Reader some of those wise and rational expositions of Scripture, as they would have them accounted, whereby they pretend to make certain passages of it plain and easy to the understandings of men, which according to our, that is the literal interpretation, contain, they say, Doctrines which are false, absurd and incomprehensible. I shall at present insist but upon one, (several others will offer themselves to us, which shall be considered in the following parts of this discourse) and that is their Exposition of those words of our Savior in the 8. of *Joh. 58. ver. Verily, verily I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am, or I was*, *πρὶν Ἀβραάμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμὶ*. Which contain our Saviours answer to a question proposed by the Jews,

Jews, who by the discourse that he had with them in the foregoing verse, took his meaning to be, that he had seen and conversed with the *Patriarch Abraham*, grounded on that expression, v. 56. *Your Father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and saw it and was glad.* Whereupon they reply, v. 57. *Thou art not yet fifty years old and hast thou seen Abraham?* To which our Savior returns this answer in the words now mentioned. And a very plain one it was, as plain as could well be expressed in words; and the meaning of it is no more then this, that tho' the Jews took him to be not *fifty years old*, as it is certain he was not since his being born of his Mother the *Virgin Mary*; yet for all that there was no such difficulty, much less impossibility that *Abraham* should see his day, and he see *Abraham*; for saith he, *before Abraham was born, I was*, or I did exist.

It is true, the thing which our Savior affirmed of himself might be accounted a *Paradox* by the Jews, and accordingly was esteemed by them both a false and blasphemous asseveration; because it did and must suppose him to exist in another and a divine nature, before his being born of his Mother, and his appearance in the world. But the words themselves are plain, the meaning of them easy, obvious and natural; in which they were understood by the Jews who then heard them, and by all others who ever since read them, till *Laelius* first, and his Nephew *Faustus* after him, blessed the world with a new and singular discovery of a meaning never heard, or dreamt of by any before their time. And this they did chiefly by the assistance of their beloved *Tropes and Figures*, new indeed and unusual, yet such as were of great use to them upon this occasion, which therefore they have heaped up and crowded in as great numbers as the text could possibly bear.

For first they have perverted the word *Abraham* from being a *proper name* to be an *Apellative*, so that according to them it doth not denote the *person of Abraham*, but rather the *privilege and blessing* that was denoted by the change of his name from *Abram* to *Abraham*; viz. that he should be *the Father of many Nations*. Now if you enquire of them whether it is ever taken in any part of the Bible otherwise then to denote

the *person of Abraham*? they must answer in the negative, and say, No, it is never taken otherwise. In this very Chapter it is mentioned four times in the verses just foregoing, and is it not allways taken in the *natural* and not in the *figurative sense*, still denoting the *person of Abraham*? yes, that must be allowed likewise. Lastly, doth not the scope and design of the whole discourse between the Jews and our Saviour, require that we should think of the *person of Abraham* when his name is mentioned? it is plain it doth so. And yet quite contrary to the *constant use of the word*, both in this Chapter, and all other parts of the Bible, as also against the *reason and design of the place*, it must be wrested and turned to a *Metaphorical signification*; because otherwise we should here find a plain and uncontrollable declaration of our Saviours *preexistence*, and that will lead us to the belief of his *Divine nature*, which must not be allowed, whatever becomes of the Scriptures which affirm it: and therefore you may *quantamcumque vim adhibere*, use any the greatest force to oblige them to speak otherwise.

But 2dly. the word *γενέσθαι* is altered from denoting the *Substantial formation and Existence of Abraham*, into an *accidental and Metaphorical mutation*, whereby he was made, not a *Man*, but the *Father of many Nations*. And the like alteration hath the verb *ἐπι* undergone, by which our Saviour design'd to signify his *real and substantial Existence*; but they have made it to denote *his Office*, viz. that of being the *Messiah*, or the Redeemer of the world. So that whereas the literal construction of the words, would lead us to this plain truth, That before *Abraham* was Born or did Exist, our Saviour had a Being and did Exist, and therefore it was no wonder that he should see him; by their figurative distorting of the words they have

¶ Quod si aliquid absurditatis inerat in prioribus interpretationibus (nam diversas excogitarant Unitarii ante hanc à Lælio nuper inventam) condonandum sane illis videtur, cum præstet aliquid absurdi dicere, quam loci alicujus sensum pro vero recipere, quo tota ferme ratio religionis nostræ turbetur, ac tantum non pervertatur. Socin. contra Eutrop. p. 680.

extracted

extracted this unexpected meaning, that before ¹ *Abram*, can be *Abraham*, that is, the *Father of many Nations*, ἐγὼ εἰμι, I, saith Jesus, must be the *Saviour and light of the world*.

Lastly, whereas the words are a plain affirmative proposition, they have transformed them so, as to contain a *Monition and Commination*, which for many ages lay hid and conceal'd under them, and must for ever have done so, had not the men before-mentioned, viz. *Laelius and Faustus*, by the assistance of *Tropes and Prayers* (if you believe them) first discovered and revealed them to the world.

The ² *Monition* is this, viz. that the Jews, to whom he directed his discourse, would believe him to be the *light and Saviour of the world*, before the *Gentiles* should be adopted into the number of *Abrahams children*, and he thereby become the *Father of many Nations*. The *Commination* ³ this, not in deed expressed, but it seems implied in the words, viz. That if once the *Gentiles* should be admitted into favour, the *Jews* for their infidelity, should be disinherited and disowned for ever.

It is true indeed, it is very good advice which they make our Saviour give the Jews, and a severe threatening they have annexed to it, which might justly deter those unhappy men from being so foolish and wicked as to slight this warning. But

¹ *Antequam Abraham fiat*, i. e. *Pater multitudinis vel multarum Gentium*, *Ego sum lux mundi*, *Ego sum via, veritas & vita*. Socin. contra Volan. p. 379.

² *Sensus verborum Christi est*, monere *Judæos* ut antequam *Gentibus* fides & pœnitentia ad vitam detur, atque ut *populus Dei* sint concedatur, credere velint ipsum esse *Christum*, *Dei filium*, ipsique fidem habere.

³ *Alioqui scil. futurum*, (quod & alibi illis sæpe *Comminatus* fuerat) ut *Gentibus* in *regnum Dei* admissis & receptis, ipsi eo priventur & foras ejiciantur. Id. contra *Erasm. Joh. vol. 2. p. 505*. *Vobis*, antequam *Abraham* fiat (hoc est, *Pater multarum Gentium*) etiam atque etiam confirmo quod ego sum. Nam postquam *Abraham* factus fuerit, non modo quicumque ex vobis noluerint credere quod ego sum (scil. *Mundi Servator, redemptor*) ut hodie vobis dixi, morientur in peccatis suis, sed facultas hoc ipsum credendi nationi vestræ in posterum adimetur. Id. advers. *Gabriel. Eutrop.* p. 678.

how is it possible to extract this *mystical Monition and Commi-
nation* out of the text, in which there is not one word that
seems to have any tendency this way? There being no men-
tion made directly or indirectly, either of *Jew* or *Gentile*,
Faith or *Infidelity*, either of *Admission* or *Exclusion* out of the
Kingdom and favour of God. And yet all this is included here,
and this Exposition makes the whole passage plain and clear, if
you believe *Socinus*. If so, then I am sure there is no distin-
ction between *clearness* and *obscurity*, between *midnight dark-
ness*, and the *brightness* at noon-day. For as *Erasmus Johannes*
told him upon this occasion, *Fateor me per omnem vitam
meam non magis contortam interpretationem audivisse. I never
heard*, saith he, of a more wretched and perverse distorting of Scri-
pture than this is. For it is certain, if the thing which he would
have contained in the text be plain in it self, yet the words
are far from being so: so far from containing any such mean-
ing, if we respect the letter and natural construction of them,
that no man that ever read them before *Laelius* ever dreamt of
any such Exposition. And even *Laelius*¹ himself with all his
wit and cunning, could never have discovered it, had it not
been (if we believe his Nephew *Faustus*) by a particular revelation
from God, which was the fruit of his frequent and earnest Prayers
directed to heaven.

¹ Quod si hoc ostendere non potest (Eutropium alloquitur) veritati con-
cedat, & Deo nos plurimum debere agnoscat, qui viro illi (Laelio scil.)
per quem omnium primum nostra aetate, sententiam quam de Jesu Christi
persona amplexi sumus, exponi voluit, hunc non minus appositum atque
adeo necessarium quam egregium & verum in Christi verbis sensum olim
patefecerit. Quod tamen non sine multis precibus, ipsius Jesus nomine
invocato, impetravit ipse. Id. ibid. Cum primum verbum fatendi in
tuis verbis animadverti, sperabam te potius fassurum nullam in vitâ tuâ
Scripturae interpretationem te audivisse, quæ hoc sit aut acutior aut ve-
rior, quæve magis divinum quid sapiat & à Deo ipso patefactam fuisse
præ se ferat. Hoc profecto affirmare ausim, cum Deus illi viro (Laelio
scil.) permulta aliis prorsus tunc temporis incognita patefecerit, vix quid-
quam inter illa omnia esse, quod hac interpretatione divinius videri queat.
Id. contra Eras. Joh. p. 505.

How is this Exposition the effect of his Prayers, and owing to a Divine Revelation? Before we did admire the impudence of the man, in obtruding such a remote, strained, far-fetcht sense on his Readers: but now we must detest his impiety, in ascribing that which was the effect, I will not say of his *wit and sagacity*; but of his *malice, obstinacy and opposition to the truth*, which put him upon this desperate method of perverting the words and distorting the plain meaning of the Scriptures, I say, in ascribing that which was the fruit of his *pride and perverseness* to the *direction and assistance of the Holy Ghost*: which is a high strain of *Blasphemy*, and equals that of the greatest *Enthusiasts*, who were wont to dub all their dreams and whymfies with the name of Inspiration, thereby doing the greatest despiht to the spirit of Grace.

But I have not done with this strange interpretation, for allowing the words to be construed as they would have them, and that the above named *monition* and *commination* are included in them; yet we are farther to enquire, what all this is to the present purpose? How doth it relate to the question in debate, *viz.* about the *person of Abraham*, and the possibility of our Saviours seeing him, who was so many Ages younger then he, and born but the other day in a manner. The Jews enquire about the *existence of two persons*, and he returns an answer about *Faith and Infidelity*, about the *favour and displeasure of God*, shewed in the *rejection of the Jews* and *reception of the Gentiles*. These indeed may be useful and important subjects, fit for our Saviour to discourse upon, and for the Jews to be instructed in. But how are they forced and drawn in here, when they are nothing at all to the purpose? Doth not this reflect upon the honour and wisdom of our Saviour, to make him give such a frivolous impertinent answer in an affair of weight and importance? No say *Socinus* and his Disciples: *it was an idle foolish*

I Sed ut conjicio durum admodum tibi videbitur quod Christus ad illud ipsum non respondeat, quod Judæi dixerant eique objecerant. Ego vero contra durum omnino videri debere existimaverim, si Christus istorum hominum perversitatem atque stultitiam quodammodo approbasset, illisque ta-

cite.

foolish question which was proposed by the Jews; and he had been no wiser if he had given a direct answer to it. They all knew his age, and the time and place of his birth: they knew, and therefore would often reproach him with it, that he was the Carpenters Son, that his mother was Mary; his brethren James and Joseph, and Simon and Judas were sufficiently known to them; and therefore for them to enquire after his seeing Abraham, and living in his days, was an absurd and a ridiculous question, against common sense and their own knowledge; to which he did not think fit to return a positive and satisfactory answer, but diverted his discourse to another subject quite different and vastly distant from it; and thereby he acted like a wise man in pursuance of the advice long before given by Solomon, of answering those fooles according to their folly.

Well! but tho these captious, perverse men did not deserve a direct, positive answer, yet one would think that our Saviour would not have returned such a one as would naturally and directly tend to deceive them first, and all others who should afterwards read it. For the words of his answer plainly import, that he was really elder then *Abraham*, which these men say is not only a simple mistake, but a dangerous and damnable error. To which they reply.

Ist, *That it is no unusual thing with our Saviour upon such occasions to express himself obscurely and ambiguously. so Enjedinus.* That's something, but not enough in this case. For according to their exposition, tis certain our Saviour doth not design only to amuse, but plainly to delude the Jews: and therefore *Soci-nus* his answer is more ingenuous; viz. *That our Saviour to shew*

cite concessisset se id dixisse, quod nullo modo dixerat; quod plane fallum ac ridiculum merito visum fuisset. Et postea; nisi igitur velimus Christum contra sapientis preceptum Pro. 26. 4. Stultis secundum Stultitiam suam ita respondisse, ut stultus & ipse una cum illis videri posset, Statuendum est prorsus, eum ad illud ipsum quod Judæi ipsi objecerant minime respondisse, &c. Id. Ibid.

I Statuendum est Christum secundum illorum stultitiam ita respondisse ut sibi sapientes esse minime videri possent, sed potius agnoscerent, se qui illum in verbis capere voluerant ac mendacii coarguere, merito ab ipso unius
verbi

dislike of these impertinent questions and of the persons who proposed them, taking occasion from the word Abraham mentioned in the foregoing verses, and making them thereby believe as if he did really intend to give them an answer to their question, alio sermonem detorquendo, eos mirifice delusit: all upon a suddain diverting his discourse to another subject, he did wisely and wonderfully delude them. Nay he doth ludere in ambiguo, as Schlichting. words it; he doth play and dally with these men, and sport himself with their mistakes. They propose a captious question to him, and he returns them a frivolous and fallacious answer, and thereby notably overreaches them. So saith Smalc. he doth studio vel data opera ambigue loqui ut sermonibus suis homines istos intricaret. As much as if he had said, they thought to ensnare our Saviour by their queries, but he so overruled the matter that they were taken in their own net, and were there so hampered and entangled, that they could never afterwards recover themselves out of their mistakes.

But I had thought that the words had contained a monition with a threatning annexed, as was said before; the design of

verbi ambiguitate delusos, ac stultitiæ suæ ac perversitatis, mirabili elegantia & brevitate sermonis severe admonitos ac castigatos fuisse. Id. ibid. Judæi sua illa interrogatione plane commeriti erant, ut Christus eos severe deluderet, nec digni ullo pacto erant quibus omnino secundum ipsam interrogationem responderet. Id. contra Eutrop. p. 678. Justissime igitur alio argute sermonem detorsit, & eos qui ipsum verbis capere volebant, adeo ipse verbis & constrinxit simul & deterruit, ut non amplius verbis contra ipsum sed factis sibi agendum putarent: Et postea; Ex his igitur omnibus apparet, quam perverse Judæi Christum interrogaverint, quamque commeriti fuerint ut Christus respondendo alio sermonem detorserit, atque interim tamen ut eos deluderet, speciem quandam ad ipsam interrogationem respondendi præ se tulerit, ibid. p. 679. Hac ratione dum Judæi illum in verbis capere conantur, is ex nomine Abraham occasione sumpta, quasi interim ad ea responderet quæ sibi objecta fuerant, alio sermonem detorquendo eos mirifice delusit, Id. Contra. Volan. p. 379.

I Nihil interim dubitandum est, Christum ita locutum esse studio, ut & hoc aut illo modo verba illius intelligi possint, ut homines improbi verba non considerantes, haberent quod speciose corrumperent. Hunc enim fuisse Christo morem homines improbos suis sermonibus quasi intricare, Smal. Contra Franz. p. 80.

which

which is to instruct men in their duty, and to caution them against the neglect of it: For which reason, these sorts of warnings, when mentioned in the Scriptures, do *usually*, and sure I think we may say *constantly*, come attended with all the sincerity and all the compassion imaginable on Gods part, in order to prevent the mistakes of foolish men, and the miseries that would otherwise overtake them. And sure some such merciful intention our Saviour must have had towards the Jews in this his monition, if it be one, because he ushers it in with so solemn a Preface as, *Verily, Verily I say unto you, &c.* No doubt if he had had a mind to have deterred them from their infidelity, he would have made choice of such words as might easily be understood, and thereby be fitted to make an impression on them. But he had other thoughts it seems, and therefore he makes use of this *intricate, ænigmatical* way of expressing himself, as might be proper not to *instruct*, but to *deceive* them. And that he might do it the more effectually, he thought it not sufficient simply to *equivocate*, but he doth it with *vehemence and solemnity*, in order to awaken their attention, thereby the more certainly to lead them into error and to accomplish their ruin.

And is not this a wise and rational way of interpreting Scripture, which involves men in ten times greater difficulties and absurdities, then those which they would endeavour to avoid by the literal exposition of them. Not now to mention the infinite dishonour and scandal which these men bring upon our blessed Saviour and his divine discourses, both which are hereby dangerously reflected upon, and thereby exposed to the contempt and laughter of *Buffoons* and *Atheists*.

I have insisted so long on this strange *Socinian* interpretation, that the Reader may justly think that it is high time to put an end to it, but I must bespeak his patience a little longer, and with his leave make a remark or two farther upon this matter before I finally dismiss it.

I have formerly observed, what many others, who were conversant in their writings, have long since complained of, that *Socinus* and his followers, in their books, and particularly their

their *Polemical Writings* and *Disputations*, seemed to have no regard to the honour of God, nor the wellfare of Religion, nor which was dearer to them then all this, *viz.* their own beloved Opinions, which they have frequently contradicted: and indeed, cared not what they sayed, provided they might with any colour avoid the arguments, with which they were pressed by their adversaries. It happens so in the case now before us, and that in *two very remarkable instances*, by which it appears that they are forced to allow, not only as great absurdities as those pretended ones which they would avoid, but in defence and maintenance of their errors, are obliged to make use of those *very Doctrines*, which at other times they have lowdly exclaimed against, and which they have made so much hast to fly from, that they have out run *Sense, and Reason, and Religion*, which they have left at a great distance behind them, without care taken for their defence and preservation.

And first, it is very well known how much the *Socinians* and *Remonstrants* exclaim against, and with what desperate consequences they aggravate the black doctrine of *Reprobation*, particularly as it is stated by *Calvin* and his rigid followers the *Supralapsarians*. And among the other ill consequences which flow from it, this is none of the least, that it seems inconsistent with the declarations which God makes of his *willingness that the sinner should be converted and live*; and withal weakens the force of all those *monitions* and *threatnings* contained in the Scriptures, which are so far, according to this doctrine, from being designed for the good and welfare of

1 And indeed not only they, but the Learned and Judicious Divines of Great Britain, who were present at the Synod of *Dort*, shewed their great dislike of that doctrine, and gave the following wise advice about it. *De Reprobationis arcano majori sollicitudine cavendum, ut non modo parce, prudenterque proponatur, sed etiam ut in eo explicando studiose vitentur horridæ illæ opiniones & in Scripturis minime fundatæ, quæ ad desperationem potius quam ædificationem faciunt, & Ecclesias quasdam reformatas scandalo ingenti gravant.* Vid. Sententiam Theol. Britan. de Persever. Sanct. prope finem

these Reprobates, that they are made use of by God on purpose to encrease their guilt, and ascertain their Condemnation. And yet this very method, (which at other times, they declaim against, as inconsistent with the wisdom and goodness of God) they make our Saviour here make use of towards the Jews. They bring him in here *advising and warning* these people of their duty, with all the seeming earnestness and passion imaginable; and to make this the more effectual, he enforces his *monition* with a *terrible threatening*, denouncing against them one of the heaviest judgments that could befall any people or nation, *viz.* that for their disobedience they should be disinherited and abandoned by God, excluded out of his Kingdome, and separated from his presence and favour for ever. And yet all this is done, though there be all the *appearance of mercy and compassion* in the behaviour and words of our Saviour, (as they are expounded by them) without any *intention of kindness*: nay so far is it from that, that on the other hand, it is done with a deliberate design to delude and entangle them in their errors and impenitence, and thereby the more effectually to contrive and compass their ruin.

Now if you would ask *Socinus* at another time, and with relation to Gods general dealing with wicked men, what construction he would put upon such a method, he would tell you, that it must necessarily lay upon God the imputation, first *Pravitatis*, of impiety, which is directly opposite to his *Holyness*. For by this sort of dealing with men, he makes himself the Author both of their sin and misery. 2dly, *Simulationis*, of Fraud and dissimulation, which is equally opposite to his *truth and goodness*; then which nothing can cast a greater reflection on the honour of God; because, it not only taxes him *with cruelty*, but makes him guilty of *Hypocrisy* likewise, while he doth not only design the ruin of men, but contrives it under the cover of kindness, and the most tender care of their welfare: A care I say of their welfare, which he discovers by all the most compassionate methods, as one would think, of *Exhortations, Warnings, Reproofs, Entreaties, &c.*

Now what is this but to play and dally with unhappy men in a matter of the greatest importance; to sport himself with their mistakes and miseries, at the same time that he declares, *he delights not in the death of a Sinner*? neither can Socinus justify this method, which he here brings in our Saviour making use of, but by having recourse to that exploded distinction of *Gods secret and revealed will*; which though in some cases is a just and warrantable distinction, yet in this case it is not to be allowed, as being inconsistent with the *truth and goodness* of God. And yet Socinus, though at other times he will not entertain it with any patience, is here forced to shelter himself and his new exposition under it, which otherwise could not be defended. For if you consider *the words* of our Saviour, which are, one would think, the discovery of his *inward thoughts and intentions*, here is nothing but kindness, and mercy, and compassion *pretended and avowed*: but if you com-

I It is worth while to hear how our own Divines before mentioned express themselves upon this subject. *Ex natura beneficii oblato, & verbo Dei apertissimo judicandum est de illis auxiliis gratiae quae hominibus suppeditantur, non autem ex abusu aut eventu. Cum igitur evangelium ex sua natura vocet homines ad poenitentiam & salutem, cum gratiae divinae excitamenta eodem tendant, nihil hic simulate à Deo agi putandum est. Hoc probant seriae illae & patheticae Rogationes, Hortationes, Exhortationes, Promissiones, &c. Quod si non omnes, quos hoc verbi spiritusque sui dono dignatur Deus, ad conversionem serio invitaret, certe & Deus nonnullos, quos ipse filii sui nomine vocaret, falleret, & promissionum Evangelicarum nuntii à vocatis falso perhibiti testimonii accusari possent, & qui ad conversionem vocati parere negligunt, redderentur excusabiliores. Neque enim ea fingi potest homines reddere inexcusabiles per verbum & spiritum vocatio, quae eo tantum sine exhibetur ut illos reddat inexcusabiles.* This unwary account of Gods calling Sinners who refuse finally to obey that call, was used to be given by many of the Anti Remonstrants. Vid: *Deum reprobos vocare hos in fines, ut magis induret, ut excusationem adimat, ut gravius puniat, ut aduersionem ipsorum ostendat, &c.* Who thereby gave their Adversaries too great advantage over them, which is here judiciously obviated by our Learned Divines, in their judgment given concerning the 3d and 4th Articles; particularly in their 3d Thesis *de Antecedentis ad Conversionem.*

pare this with his *secret purpose*; you will find it all *Collusion and Imposture*, and nothing less really designed then their well-fare. It is true, he *threatens* them for their infidelity, but his real intention is to shut them up close in unbelief. He *warns* them indeed of their danger, *but it is only* that he may bring it the more certainly upon them, and to render them the *more inexcusable* under it.

The second Opinion which *Socinus* here espouses, and without which he cannot justify his exposition of the words before mentioned, is, that it is *lawful to punish one man for the Sins of another*. This is contrary to his known and avowed Principles, in pursuance of which, both he and his friends the *Remonstrants*, deny the Doctrine of *Original Sin*, and the *satisfaction* of our blessed Saviour, as it hath allways been stated in the *Catholick Church*; whereby we are bound to affirm, that the whole posterity of *Adam* were punished for the Sin of their Forefather, and that our *Saviour* underwent the punishment due to the Sins of mankind. This they pronounce with their usual confidence, a high piece of injustice and cruelty, and which cannot be justified either by the *consent or voluntary undertaking of our Saviour* with relation to his *own sufferings*, nor by any pretence of *power and prerogative* in God with relation to those of mankind, upon the account of our *first Parents* disobedience. And yet he is fain to own it in the present case, *viz.* of our Saviours dealing with the Jews.

For here he makes the *commination*, which he saith is included in these words, not only to reach the *present Jews*, but likewise their *whole race and posterity*, who should be punished for the infidelity of their *Forefathers*. You'll say, the Children tread in the steps of their Forefathers, and continue in their unbelief and opposition to our Saviour; and therefore as they partake of the *guilt*, so they may justly be involved in the same *Condemnation*: so that the Sins of their Ancestors may be the *occasion*, but their own sins are the *proper cause* of their punishment. This indeed is the excuse, which at other times they make use of to acquit the justice of God, and to vindicate his proceedings in punishing the Sins
of

of the Fathers upon the Children, who by ſucceeding their Anceſtors in their guilt, do juſtly likewise inherit the puniſhments inflicted on them for it, as we ſaid before.

But no ſuch answer can be made or allowed in this caſe. You will ſay why? are not the Jews of this Age and ſo up to the times of our Saviour obliged to believe in Chriſt, and are they not able to do ſo, and therefore is not their infidelity without excuse? I ſay no, for if what Socinus affirms here be true, the poſterity of thoſe Infidels who lived in our Saviour's time, are for their Forefathers fault, deprived of the very faculty and capacity of believing in him; ſo that they ought, one would think, to be pityed rather than puniſhed for not doing that, which is not in their power, though it ſhould be in their inclination to practice. No! they muſt not expect to have any ſuch merciful allowance, or that their infidelity ſhould come within the compaſs of any ſuch favourable conſtruction: For ſince their Forefathers would not believe Chriſt to be the light and ſaviour of the World, the Gentiles are now admitted into Abraham's family, adopted to all the favors and privileges of his true Children, and they muſt be diſinherited and rejected forever. In ſhort, their whole nation is caſt off, they are reprobated and deſtined to ruin.

Well, but tho the decree is gone forth, it is to be hoped it may be reverſed. For the purpoſes of God, how peremptory ſoever they may be thought to be, are yet all mutable, and God himſelf thereby lyable to change. So Socinus and his followers have always ſtated this matter, and therefore it is to be hoped, that God may alter his reſolution in this caſe, which

¹ Sensus verborum Chriſti eſt monere Judæos, ut antequam gentibus fides & pœnitentia ad vitam detur, credere velint ipſum eſſe Chriſtum, Dei filium ipſique fidem adhibere. Alioqui videlicet futurum, ut gentibus in regnum Dei admiſſis, ipſi eo priventur & foras ejiciantur. Et poſtea; Judæos, poſtquam Gentes per fidem populus Dei ſunt factæ, repulſos fuiſſe, nec illis generatim viam ad ſalutem amplius patere. Socin. Contra Eraſm. Joh. p. 505.

² See the firſt part of the Preſervative p. 25, 26. 47.

as long as he doth with *good reason*, he will act as *wise men* use to do, and therefore there is no fear that it should lay him open to the imputation of weakness or folly. But I am afraid this supposition will afford no relief to these unhappy men, who seem to be doomed to *ruin* by an *absolute and irreversibile Decree*.

For in short they are placed out of reach and beyond all *possibility* of redemption, and therefore can have no *hopes* of pardon: because they cannot *hope* for it but upon the conditions of *Faith and Repentance*; now the very ¹ *power* to believe and repent is quite taken from them, and therefore it is not possible that they should ever recover the favor of God, which they have lost upon the account of the Sins of their Forefathers. This is no more then what ² *Smalcus* and *Crellius* have likewise affirmed of them, as I have before observed, viz. *That God hath shut them up close prisoners in infidelity, out of which they have neither means nor hopes of escaping: that the divine vengeance still pursues them, and detains them in their blindness, etiam invitos, even against their own wills and inclinations.*

And what these men say of the *Jews*, ³ *Ruarus* will affirm of the *Gentiles* and the *Pagan* world, "That forasmuch as the " termes of mercy and reconciliation, which were once offered,

¹ *Vobis antequam Abraham fiat, etiam atque etiam confirmo quod ego sum. Nam postquam Abraham factus fuerit, non modo quicumque ex vobis noluerint Credere quod ego sum, ut hodie vobis dixi, morientur in peccatis suis, sed facultas hoc ipsum credendi nationi vestræ in posterum adimetur. Socin. Defensio Aima advers. contra Eutrop. p. 678.*

² See the second part of the Preservative, and the passages there cited to this purpose out of those Authors, p. 53, 54.

³ *Respondeo, Flagitia illa quæ ibidem recensentur, (scil. 1. Cap. ad Rom.) quamquam antea perpetrabantur, tamen à voluntaria hominum nequitia tunc profecta fuisse: postea vero iusto Dei judicio tanquam necessaria, quæque non poterant non fieri, inducta fuisse. Et cum liberum antea fuerat, nuncio improbitati remisso, per Christi doctrinam ad meliorem frugem redire, deinceps occæcatis mentibus ne videre quidem tantam Evangelii lucem, cujus lumen in mundo tunc passim resplendebat concessum esse. Ruar. Epist. 17. Joach. Peuschelio. Vol. 2.*

“ have been ungratefully rejected by them, God thought fit
 “ to remove his Candlestick from them, nay not only from
 “ them, but likewise from their unhappy posterity, who suffer
 “ for their Ancestors Sins to this very day, groping for their
 “ way like men in the dark, without light and without any
 “ Guide, who may be able to conduct them into those paths
 “ which will lead them to eternal happiness.

What *rigid Calvinist* can raise this matter to a higher pitch than these men do? Tho the former do it with a much better grace, because they write and speak uniformly and in agreement with their known Principles. But the latter have always accounted the positions before mentioned to be not only *false*, but *impious* and *blasphemous doctrines*, and yet here make use of them to give countenance to their extravagant expositions of Scripture, which it seems cannot otherwise be maintained. We see what an absolute power these men challenge over *Religion* and *Scripture*, and the *principles and maxims of reason* likewise, as they would have them accounted, all which must stoop to their authority and be subject to their pleasure. In short, *true and false, right and wrong, mercy and cruelty, justice and Tyranny*, must vary and alter their natures according as they are serviceable or prejudicial to their Opinions or Interests.

I proceed now in the next place to shew a *third evil consequence*, which attends this *figurative* and *mystical* exposition of Scripture made use of by our Adversaries, and that is, that by denying the *clearness and perspicuity* of Scripture, even in those matters in which it ought to speak openly and plainly, in matters I mean of *Doctrine* and *Belief*, they very effectually overthrow its being a *rule of Faith*, and thereby give too great countenance and support to one of the most dangerous errors of Popery.

Now the nature and formal notion of a *rule* consists in this, that it is the *standard and measure* whereby we are to make a judgment of other things. And a *Rule of Faith* is that, by which we are to judge of the truth or falsehood of any *Doctrines* in Religion: which therefore must be plain and clear,
 or

or otherwise we had as good be without it. For no man can well govern his judgment and apprehensions about the nature of things by any writing which is *obscure*, and much less by one that is *ambiguous* and *equivocal*. This writing had as good be given us in an *unknown language*, as in words *whose meaning cannot be known* and understood, as it cannot if those rules for the *interpreting* it, laid down by our Adversaries, be allowed.

For there are no expressions so plain, but by the help of *Tropes* and *Figures* may be so distorted, as quite to loose their *natural* and *genuine signification*. And there are few words which it is not *possible* in some *remote, farfetched sense*, to construe in a different manner from that, in which they have generally by all wise and good men been received. Now if it be but barely *possible* for the words to be taken in another sense, that will be sufficient, *as the Socinians say*, for their purpose, and will be a warrant for them to construe them in the *possible*, against the *natural* and *probable sense*. And if so, *then I say*, it will be impossible by these writings either to *confirm the truth*, or to *confute any error*: because there are no expressions of Scripture so plain and clear, but by some one or other of those methods prescribed by our Adversaries, you may avoid the force of them.

Now that which follows from hence in the fourth place is, that the Scriptures ought to be rejected on all hands, and quite laid aside, and that for three very good and substantial reasons. 1st. Because they will (if this method of expounding them be allowed) be rendered *useless and insignificant*. Nay, not only so, but in the 2^d place, they will be *inconvenient and troublesome*. Yea lastly, to rise one pitch higher, they will be found *mischievous and dangerous*.

First then I say they will be rendered *useless and unprofitable*; It is true indeed the Scriptures give a different account of themselves, in which we find many high Elogies and commendations of their *usefulness and excellency*, particularly that they are *profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for instruction in Righteousness*, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished

furnished unto all good works, 2 Tim. 3. 16, 17. ver. Nay, in the verse before it is said, that *they are able to make us wise unto Salvation*. By which it should seem that they are not only *useful* but *necessary*; and therefore it is highly fitting that every man who hath a care of his Salvation, should diligently read, peruse and meditate upon them, and make them, according to the Holy Psalmists advice, *his study day and night*. Other books may make us *wise and learned*, but these will make us *happy*, and can furnish us with such a knowledge, as will not only be an accomplishment to our natures, but even *eternal life*. Jo. 17. 3.

These are great commendations indeed, but it seems we must not too hastily rely upon them, otherwise we shall find our selves in the event mistaken. The holy Writers might be too much prejudiced and byassed in favour to themselves. *Socinus* and his Disciples were more indifferent persons, and therefore speak (as becomes them) with greater freedom and impartiality. The Scriptures, if we rely upon their judgment in interpreting them, will be found unprofitable to any of the forementioned purposes; being neither useful for the *information of a mans self*, nor can they enable him to *instruct others*. They are not fitted for the *confirmation of the truth*, nor for the *reproof and confutation of Heresies*. For whatever writing is designed for that purpose, must be delivered in words of a certain and determinate signification, which the Scriptures it seems have not; especially if a *possible meaning* may be preferred before a *probable*, and a *figurative sense*, taken up arbitrarily where there is no just occasion for it, may destroy the *natural and the obvious*, which the usual construction of the words, the context, the scope and the design of the writer necessarily lead you unto. For there are no expressions which either the *wit of man*, or the *wisdom of God* can find out, but may by these means be perverted to any *remote*, nay to any *absurd or impious* meaning, which by the help of *figures* may possibly be extracted out of them.

But 2dly, At this rate they will be found to be not only *useless*, but *inconvenient* likewise and *troublesome*, which is a farther

reason why they should be laid aside, by every one who would consult his own ease and quiet. For these writings being framed in such doubtful and enigmatical expressions, they may *puzzle* and *perplex our understandings*, but cannot be serviceable to the noble purposes of *instruction and information*, for which, one would think, they were originally designed.

It is true, we are commanded *to search the Scriptures*, which ought to be our constant study and meditation, and no man can employ his thoughts upon a more useful and noble subject. But after you have spent your time in perusing these holy Writings, and used your best endeavours to find out the true meaning of them, *viz. by studying Languages, consulting Versions, examining the Context, comparing other parts and passages of Scripture*, that is, one Text with another, to find out the analogy and agreement between them, you had much better have employed your pains upon some other Subject, for your time and your labor is all lost and in vain. For after you have, as you may think, found out the true meaning of these holy Writings, and have erected a plain scheme of Doctrines which you have faithfully collected out of them, your Adversaries all upon a sudden produce a Trope, which lay in ambuscade, unexpected and unheard of, by the means of which they will overturn all that in a minute, which you have been so long, and with so much care and diligence erecting. So that the understanding, instead of that *satisfaction* which it proposed to its self in this enquiry after truth, by these means is left under *confusion and disappointment*; which is apt to create the greatest disquiet and uneasiness, which can possibly overtake a thoughtful and inquisitive mind.

In short, by directing men to the Scriptures for instruction, if a *Socinian* is to be their guide, you only bring them into a *Labyrinth*, out of which no care, no endeavours can extricate them. For if a *figure* may, when ever you please, be allowed to destroy the *Letter* of the Scriptures, why may not one *Trope* be brought in to ruin *another*, and when by these means all truth and certainty is destroyed, nothing but disorder and confusion can succeed. In such various and intricate ways,

ways, how can it fall out otherwise, but that men must go backward and forward, and wander in an *eternal maze*, out of which no *Ariadnes thread* can conduct and guide them? And therefore, if it were only for their own ease and quiet, men would be tempted to lay aside the Scripture, which instead of *instructing*, serves only to *perplex* and *disappoint* them.

Nay this is not all, there is a greater reason still behind why they should be rejected, and that is *zdy*, because they are not only *troublesome and useless*, but likewise *mischievous and dangerous*; tending to lead men into endless and desperate errors, if our Adversaries may be believed. Such as are the Doctrines of the *Trinity and Incarnation and redemption of the World by the death and sufferings of our Saviour*; which in the opinion of these men, are not only *foolish and absurd*, but likewise *Impious and Blasphemous Opinions*: which yet are plainly delivered in the Scriptures, in expressions as clear as words in a manner can make them. It is true indeed, it may be said, the *words*, if you are guided by them, might lead you into the belief of the above named Opinions; but you must know that there is a *Figurative and Mystical meaning* couched under them, and this you are chiefly to regard and govern your expositions by. But how shall I be assured of this? for if I consult the scope, the *design* of the writer, the *connexion* and dependance the words have upon those going before or which follow after, they all give countenance to the *literal exposition*; which I cannot recede from without using the greatest violence to the words, and falling into the greatest absurdities imaginable in the interpretation. Yet for all this they must not be understood according to the *literal construction*. No? then I say the expressions of Scripture, even there where they ought to speak the most plainly, are the most abstruse, intricate, enigmatical that ever were uttered; more ambiguous than the *Devils Oracles*, and more dangerous likewise.

For these latter, tho' *doubtfully expressed*, yet might almost be *indifferently* construed in either of the senses contained under them. And hereby the *Devil* took care of his *own credit*,

though he did not always of the *welfare of his Votaries*. But the Scriptures, according to these men, seem calculated on purpose to lead men into mistakes; they being scarce capable of any other than the *false meaning*: the words naturally and directly leading you into it. While the true, which is theirs; requires great skill and nicety to find it out; such as are *Grammatical Criticisms*, *Figurative distortions*, in which the Reader must discover more *malice* than *wit*, in straining and bending and forcing the words to speak otherwise than ever the Writers designed. And hereby *Myriads* of men in all Ages ever since the *Bible* hath been published, have been deceived and lead into the *most pernicious errors*, (in the opinion of our *Unitarians*) dishonorable to God, destructive of Piety, dangerous to Souls of men; such as are *Idolatry* in worshiping a meer man, (for our Saviour is no better, as to his nature, in their esteem) nay, *Deifying an accident*, *consecrating a quality*, offering *Incense* and paying their Devotions to what it self is but a *steam* and a *vapour*; for under these Characters they have represented the holy Spirit in their writings, revered and adored by us as the third glorious person in the *ever blessed Trinity*.

Now what can possibly be contrived by the *wit of Man*, or the *malice of the Devil*, more proper and effectual to disgrace and vilify these holy Writings than this account, whereby they are made not only *accessary*, but *principals* in all those dangerous mistakes, (as our Adversaries account them) which have all along prevailed in the Christian Church: Leading thus into error not only *silly and unstable Souls*, but the *Wise*, the *Sober*, the *Inquisitive* of all Ages; celebrated for their *Learning*, *Caution*, *Vertue*, and all the other good qualities, which might help to guard them from being deceived; who yet all groped in the dark, and wandered in a *Labyrinth* of confusion and error, till *Socinus* in great compassion enlightened the world and rescued men from these mistakes, which by the *diligent reading of the Scriptures* they were fatally lead into.

For confirmation of the truth of what I have now asserted, I shall appeal to *Socinus* himself, and to the acknowledgments made by him and *his followers* upon this Subject. The *Divinity*

nity and Incarnation of our Saviour are two *Capital Articles* of the Christian Faith, which yet in the opinion of the above named *Socinus* and his Disciples, are *two foolish and blasphemous errors*. And yet as absurd and dangerous as they are thought to be, they have been professed by all good Christians ever since the *Bible* hath been published.

Not now to cite all those passages in which they are plainly mentioned, I shall content my self with those which are to be found in the *first Chap. of St. Johns Gospel*. There the *λογος* or *Word*, the Character by which our Saviour is described, is styled *God*, *The word was with God*, and *the word was God*, v. 1. The *Creation* of the material world is ascribed to him, which was a clear proof of his Divinity. *All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made* v. 3. and v. 10. *He was in the World, and the World was made by him*. This word which was truly God, was really Man likewise, *He was made flesh, and dwelt among us* v. 14. These words are so plain and so full, that all unprejudiced persons, not only *Christians*, but *Jews* and *Pagans* have construed them in the same manner, so as to find out the *Divinity and Incarnation* of our Saviour, and the *Creation of the World* by him, plainly expressed there.

Neither can it be pretended, that they did thus interpret them out of *prejudice and partiality*, and in compliance with any *preconceived Opinions*, which our Adversaries still lay to the charge of the Christian Church. For *Amelius* the *Platonist* upon the reading of these words falls into a rapture and admiration, meeting with such unexpected Doctrines, which he little thought to have found in the Bible. *Julian the Apostate* would have denied this Testimony, if the words would have allowed him. But he could not interpret them to any other sense: and therefore, though he was desirous that it should be believed, that the Christians ascribed a Divine nature to our Saviour without any warrant from the writings of the other

¹ See the Testimonies of Amel. and Julian Cited in the 3d. part of the *Preservative* p. 32.

Evangelists (which was a false and a malicious suggestion) yet when he came to peruse these words of *St. John*, he hath nothing to reply, but falls a railing at that Divine writer, and would feign have him esteemed a *Cheat and an Impostor*.

The ancient *Hereticks*, styled *Alogi*, found the expressions so plain, that they had no way of avoiding the force of them (for it seems they had not then learnt the method of perverting the words of Scripture so much practised by our later Adversaries) but by denying *St. John* to be the Author of this Gospel, and ascribing it, tho very ridiculously, to *Cerintus* the Heretick. Thus the *Enemies* of the Faith, and thus the *Friends* of it, have allways construed these words of *St. John*, all along from the first Ages of the Church down to the times of *Socinus*, who hath blessed the world with the discovery of a new meaning, never before heard or dreamt of. And therefore in his Preface to his Explication of this Chapter, he tells his Reader, that what he had to say, *majori ex parte sunt nova, & nostro seculo inaudita*. And particularly when he comes to examin the 10. v. ² He declares, *that no man that he knew of had found out the right meaning of those words before himself*. In short, since *Jews* and *Pagans*, *Hereticks* and *Apostates* have by reading the Scriptures discovered the abovenamed Articles of our Faith, what wonder is it that all good *Christians* have done so likewise: the plain, natural construction of the words, the scope and design of the writer, all conspiring to instruct them in those Doctrines. So that if they have been mistaken, 'tis the Gospel, and particularly that of *St. John*, hath directly lead them into it, the Author of it having given them no caution against it, nor the least *intimation* of any *mystical sense*, which should perswade them to reject the letter, and to construe it by *Figures* and *Metaphors*.

Again, the Doctrine of *Christs preexistence* is that which is owned and professed by all good Christians, and they are lead into the belief of it by many, and those the most clear and ex-

¹ *Vid. Epiphan. Her. 51. quæ est Alog. Cap. 3, 4.*

² *Quid autem hoc loco sibi velit Johannes à nemine, quod sciam, adhuc recte expositum fuit, Socin. Explic. 1 Cap. Joh. v. 10.*

press passages of Scripture that can be uttered. And particularly that before mentioned, *Jo. 8. Before Abraham was, I am.*

In this sense the words have allways been understood, so as to denote our Saviours existence before be Birth of *Abraham*. Neither are they capable of another meaning, without falling into many and great absurdities, to which all the former Expositions of the *Unitarians* were lyable (as *Socinus* himself acknowledged, as we heard before) till his Uncle *Lælius* furnished the world with his new and surprizing Interpretation. But he was a great while before he could hammer it out. The Expressions were so plain, especially when considered with the relation they bear to those foregoing, that he could not tell how to wrest them to another meaning. He tryed and tugged and used his best endeavours, but they would not do. He musters up all the forces of his *wit*, and which is more, of his *cunning and malice*, winding and turning the words every way, but all in vain: the words still proved too hard for him. Till at length he bethinks himself of a new stratagem, and betakes himself to his *Prayers* as his last refuge; and then comes in to his assistance, *Dæmon* *ὁ πονηρὸς πνεῦμα*. Not the *Spirit of truth*, but that other *evil Spirit*, the *Father of lies*, who sometimes *transformes himself into an Angel of light*, who furnished him with this wretched and perverse Interpretation.

Now what can the conclusion of all this be, but that it must be no matter of *wonder* (nay the contrary must almost be a *miracle*;) that men should be brought to believe a Doctrine, such as this of *Christs preexistence*, how dangerous or absurd soever it may be esteemed, which is so far countenanced by the *phrase* and *letter* of the Scripture, that it cannot be otherwise expounded but by the help of a *new Revelation* from Heaven; which few men can hope for, and those who pretend to it are generally reputed *Enthusiasts and Impostors*.

Once more, The *Adoration and Invocation* of our Saviour hath been the constant usage and practice of the Church of Christ in all Ages, since the first planting of Christianity. The lawfulness of this indeed was called in question, and denied by *Francis David* and his Partizans in the last Age; but they were
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herein violently opposed by Socinus; who justifies the lawfulness of it by *Scripture*, and as a farther confirmation of it, appeals to the *constant practice* of the whole Church from the times of the Apostles; and thus expostulates with his Adversary. *Whence comes it to pass think you, that from the first being and Birth of the Church of Christ down to our times, so many persons, and among them, the holy Martyrs and others famous for their Wisdom, Learning and Piety; should be induced to entertain so great an error, as to believe Christ to be that one true God, who Created the World: but that they observed those things too openly and plainly to be attributed to him in the Scriptures, which are wont to be ascribed only to the true God: and among them divine Worship and Invocation, or those things (viz. the properties and operations of the Godhead) from which that Adoration and Invocation cannot be separated?* Here this man hath given us a true account of the rise of those dangerous errors (as he accounts them) which have all along prevailed in the Christian Church concerning the *Divinity of Christ, &c.* which tho' at other times he ascribes to *Ignorance, Stupidity, Malice, and a Love of the World*, nay sometimes to down right frenzy or fascination, and wonders how any, who are not bewitched or otherwise quite bereft of common sense, can fall into such mistakes: yet here he changes his note, and proclaims the true cause of them, viz. the *holy Scriptures*, in which these doctrines *nimis aperte*, are too plainly delivered. And therefore it is no wonder that *common and vulgar readers* should be thus deceived, since men of *Learning and Piety*, nay those not of ordinary accomplishments, but *doctrina & pietate clarissimi*, yea even the

¹ *Nam unde factum esse existimas, ut ab ipso ferme nascentis Ecclesie initio usque ad nostra tempora, tot viri, adeo ut nullus sit numerus, non minus pietate quam doctrina clarissimi, tot ipsius Christi sanctissimi Martyres, eum alioquin gravissimum errorem secuti fuerint, quod Christus sit unus ille Deus qui omnia creavit, nisi quia nimis aperte in sanctis literis ea illi attribui adimadverterunt quae soli Deo tribui consueverunt; & inter cetera potissimum adorationem & invocationem, aut ea à quibus adoratio & invocatio nullo pacto sejungi queant?* Socin. Epist. 3. ad Matthæum Radec. Op. Tom. I. p. 391.

holy *Martyrs* themselves, who have testified their sincerity, and sealed the truth of these doctrines with their Blood; all these, considerable for their multitudes as well as for all other good qualities; so many, *ut illorum nullus sit numerus*, that they cannot be numbred; have been fatally lead into these errors, by the direction and words of the holy Scriptures. If therefore they have been mistaken, they ought in all reason to be *excused*, and the *Scriptures* must bear the blame, and consequently, if this account be true, ought, as we said before, to be rejected and laid aside.

Now what *Socinus* affirms of the *obscurity* and *ambiguity* of the Scriptures, in saying *one thing* in plain and open expressions, and yet meaning *quite another*; is also owned by his *Disciples*, who have likewise given us the reason of that ambiguity; *viz. ut errare volentibus, errandi merita adesset occasio*. If the Holy Writers, as they have been wont to be accounted, should allways express themselves *uprightly and sincerely*, men could not easily mistake their meaning, and then how should errors prevail.

It is true, many things in the Scriptures are *hard to be understood*, which *foolish and unlearned men* are apt to wrest to their own hurt. But that is their own fault, who will be tampering with things beyond their skill. They ought to pass over such difficult passages, and employ their study and meditation upon those plainer and more important parts, which every Christian, who hath a capacity to learn, is bound *explicitely to believe* as necessary to his Salvation. But even here, if our Adversaries expositions are to be relyed upon, those passages which we think the *most plain* and obvious to any the most common understanding, are yet so *craftily worded*, as to contain an obscure

I *Spiritum Sanctum verba ac stylum virorum divinatorum sic moderatum fuisse, ne errare volentibus, errandi merita deesset occasio*. Schlicht. contra Meisn. p. 43. *Nihil interim dubitandum est, Christum ita locutum esse studio, ut & hoc & illo modo illius verba intelligi possint, ut homines improbi verba non considerantes, haberent quod speciose corrumperent*. Smalc. contra Franz. p. 8.

sense, never to be found out but by *remote* and *unusual Tropes*, which *no honest or wise man* would ever think of; nor indeed any men, *nisi qui ex sacrosancto Dei verbo ludum & focum faciunt, & ludibro illud, quantum in illis est, aliis exponunt*, that I may use *Smalcus* his words upon this occasion.

Now this account of the Scriptures, which these men have given the world, at first view must appear *extreamly scandalous*, and such as is like to give just offence to all Christian ears, and to be sure they were aware of it; and therefore they have an excuse in reserve, *viz.* that tho the *Scriptures* be penned in such a *doubtful manner* as is fitted to *deceive* the Readers, yet they are only *homines improbi & non considerantes*, wicked and inconsiderate men, who are thus designed to be imposed upon, saith *Smalc.* Those only to be *brought into the snare*, *errare volentes*, saith *Schlicht.* *who are willing to be entangled in Errors.*

But when things come to be examined, it is found that these wicked, inconsiderate men, so easy and so willing and so fit to be imposed upon, are, by their leave, the generality of Readers, and among them great numbers of the highest rank for Learning and Piety, *doctrina & pietate clarissimi*, as we heard before from *Socinus*, whom neither *wisdom*, nor *vertue*, nor *care*, nor *caution* could guard from being deceived, (as our Adversaries account it) and their deceit was owing to the constant, diligent Reading and Meditation on the holy Scriptures.

Now what must the consequence of all this be, but in the last place, that men will be tempted either totally to *lay aside all Revelation*, and turn *Deists* or *Atheists*, call them which you will? or else, if they will retain the Scriptures, since the *rule* is so *obscure* and so *uncertain*, it must necessarily make way for some *Infallible Judge and Interpreter*; and when he is once admitted, all other parts of *Popery* will follow of course. And this men at length will unavoidably be brought to, I mean upon supposition that what our Adversaries say of the Scriptures is true. And a much wiser method it will be, then that every man should be left to the conduct of his own *humor and fancy*, and then that the *Scriptures* should be wrested and distorted, to give countenance to all those *extravagant notions*, and
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whymfies which they account, and will therefore call, their *Reason*.

For our *Unitarians* have brought matters to that pass, that you are not obliged to bring your *Opinions* to the *Scriptures*, and by them as by a certain *rule and standard* to judge of their truth and falshood; but you must bring the *Scriptures* to your own *own notions and opinions*, and interpret them thereby.

Now these being so *mutable, various*, and sometimes directly *opposite* to each other in men of different *Educations, Complexions, Humors, and Interests*; the *Scriptures* therefore must be subject to the same *variety of Expositions*; they must be turned and winded and wrested all manner of ways, to give countenance to these various and contrary *Opinions*.

From whence innumerable mischiefs and disorders must follow. *Emulation, Strife, Contention, Censures, Calumnies, Divisions and Schismes* will universally prevail; to prevent the trouble and scandal of which, when men have sufficiently tired themselves with roving and wandering in an endless maze of wild and wicked *Opinions*; then for their *own ease* they will be content to sit down at the feet of some *Infallible Teacher*, whose instructions they will think fit to receive without farther *enquiry or examination*.

And tho hereby men may not make any sufficient provision for *truth*, yet they will in some measure provide for their own *private ease and quiet*, and not only so, but for that of the *publick peace* likewise, which by the former *Schisms and Divisions*, which will unavoidably attend such endless variety of *Opinions*, must be dangerously shocked, to the great disturbance, if not the overthrow at length both of Church and State. For no *Society small or great, Ecclesiastical or Civil, when it is thus divided against it self, can long stand*. And this the *Papists* are sufficiently aware of, and therefore they wisely sit behind the Curtain, tho they do not sit Idle to be sure, but underhand abet and encourage men in these disputes and opposition to the Scripture, (under the disguise of being *Advocates for Reason, and Patrons forsooth of the rights and liberties of mankind*) which in the conclusion may tend more to the advantage of their cause, then any open and avowed vindication of their Religion ever did

did, or ever will do. And thus we have seen the mischiefs that inevitably attend this method of making reason the supreme judge in all affairs of Religion, with relation to the *holy Scriptures*, the *truth, certainty and authority* of which are hereby totally subverted.

I proceed now to consider the second evil consequence, which flows from it, with relation to our blessed Saviour and his Apostles, together with the other Inspired Writers, whose Honour and Reputation is hereby dangerously invaded. And indeed their veracity and authority can never be vindicated, if Reason be once set up in opposition to Revelation.

That *Christ is God*, is that which was always believed in the Christian Church; and they are warranted, as they think, in that belief, by the numerous and plain declarations made by *Christ himself* and his *Apostles* to this purpose. *Socinus* and his followers, on the other hand, say that he is, as to his nature, a *meer man*, having no being antecedent to that which he received in the Womb of the Virgin, and the being that he there had was *purely humane*. Now this Opinion of *Socinus*, and those declarations made by our *Saviour* and his *Apostles* about this matter are absolutely inconsistent: So that either *Socinus* was highly injurious to our *Saviour* in refusing to acknowledge his *Divinity*; or our *Saviour* was highly to be blamed for assuming so great and undeserved an honour to himself; which could not be done without a bold and dangerous encroachment upon the Prerogative and Sovereignty of God Almighty; and thereby bringing himself under the just Character of an Impostor and a Blasphemer.

His *Apostles* must likewise be judged to be in the Combination, all Conspiring to Cheat and Gull the World into the belief of his *divine nature*. It will be said by *Socinus*, that the *Christian Church* must entirely bear the blame of these mistakes, which they have taken up without any warrant from *Christ* and his *Apostles*, who have given no occasion in their Writings for any such Perswasion. But how then could all good Christians, from the first Ages of Christianity to the times

times we live in, be induced to entertain any such Opinion? Why, if our Adversaries are to be credited, it hath been owing to *stupidity, blindness, prejudices, and diverse corrupt passions*, which have fatally hurried men into this belief.

Now the only way to determine this controversy, is by appealing to the *Scriptures* themselves, and to the declarations there frequently made by our *Saviour* and his *Apostles*, by which they doe, as we say, not only *intimate*, but sometimes *expressly declare*, and by clear and irrefragable arguments *prove* him to be a *person divine*. To cite all the passages which occur to this purpose, would be in a manner to transcribe the *New Testament*. I shall content my self with a few, but those so plain and full, that they will be every way sufficient to demonstrate the truth of what we affirm.

Now if we enquire after the account which *Christ* gave of himself, we shall find that he allways declared himself to be the *Son of God*, nay his *only begotten Son*, *Jo. 3. 15. 16*. A name two great and August for any the most glorious Creature. The *Angels* dare not assume any such Title to themselves; for unto which of them said God at any time, *thou art my Son this day have I begotten thee*, *Heb. 1. 5*. When ever he mentions God, he allways speaks of him under this Relation of a *Father*, as of his *own proper, natural Father*, and not only such by vertue of *Adoption*. And therefore the Jews by the tenor of his discourse, and the manner of the expressions used by him, *Jo. 5. 17*. understood his meaning to be, that he was the *Son of God* so as to be partaker of the *same nature*, and thereby *made himself equal with God*, *v. 18*. This consequence the Jews drew from his words, and our Saviour was so far from disavowing it, that he furnishes them with a good argument to confirm it, by assuring them that he was possessed of the *same divine power* with his Father, *What ever the Father doth, these also the Son doth likewise*, *v. 19*. Particularly he tells them that he was able, and would hereafter *raise the Dead*. *That all judgement was committed to him* *v. 21, 22*. That is, the Sovereign power of Life and Death, which can belong to none but him that is truly God.

Again, he allways declared, *That he came down from Heaven,*

ven, *Jo.* 6. 38. and *Jo.* 3. 13. *That he was from above, and not of this World, Jo.* 8. 25. which might justly give occasion to that question of the Jews *v.* 25. *who art thou?* for from the beginning he allways affirmed, that *he proceeded forth, and came from God, v.* 42. who was his *natural Father*, and therefore *He and the Father were one, Jo.* 10. 30. Of the *same Nature and Essence*; which he there proves by two plain Arguments.

First, that he was possessed of the *same power*, and thereby enabled to doe *the same works* with his Father *v.* 37. And therefore *tho' you do not believe me, i. e.* my words, saith Christ, you should *believe my works, v.* 38. which were a clear proof of his Divinity. Secondly, that he was intimately and adequately united to his Father, *The Father is in me and I in him.* Truly and properly by an *Identity of Nature*, and not only by an *Union and Consent of Will and Affections.* For *he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father*, as he argues the Case with his Apostle Philip *Jo.* 14. 9. where he speaks of this *essential union* between him and his Father several times, and lays an *Emphasis* upon it *v.* 11. *Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me;* For proof of which, he appeals as he had done before *c.* 10. to the *Works* which he did, and which could be performed by none but one possessed of the *same power*, and therefore must be partaker of the *same Divine nature* with his Father. The *properties* being an unquestionable proof of *the essence*, from which they flow, and from which they cannot be separated.

Thus we see what declarations our Saviour all along makes of himself, which might justly give occasion to that question of the *Jews* before mentioued *Jo.* 8. 25. *Who art thou?* And *Pilate* likewise, when he heard that he made himself the Son of God, might well enquire, *whence art thou?* *Jo.* 19. 8. Now if in the mean time he were only a meer man, the passages before mentioned could not with any truth or decency be applied to him; and therefore since by such a *loftyness and sublimity of expression*, he endeavoured to raise his own *Character*, and form such vast apprehensions of himself in the minds of men, as if he really was God, (since his words can amount to no less, and so they were understood both by his friends

friends and enemies,) If, I say, in the mean time he were only a man, he might justly be reputed a downright cheat and Impostor, such as deserved the treatment which he afterwards received from the *Jews* and *Romans*: and the former, upon this supposition, could not be blamed for requiring the execution of their Law, and that judgment might pass upon him as a *Malefactor* according to his deserts. For they *had a Law* against Blasphemy, and by that Law he ought to dye, because he made himselfe the Son of God, *Jo. 19. 7.* or as they elsewhere express themselves, because *that he being a man, made himself God. Jo. 10. v. 33.*

The *Evangelists* and *Apostles* of our Lord all along inculcate the same doctrine, and by the account which they give of him, it is plain that their design was to form in the minds of men a belief of something in him that was *Divine*, not only as to his *qualities*, but as to his *nature and essence*. They style him *the word and wisdom of God*, and say that *in the beginning he was with God, and really was God, Jo. 1. 1.* They call him *the true God, Jo. 1. 5. 20.* *The great God Tit. 2. 13.* *Our only Lord God, Jud. v. 4.* *God blessed for ever, Rom 9. 5.* Nay they do not only *affirm* him to be God, but *prove* him to be so by all the Arguments that were fit and proper to be made use of upon this occasion. And those Principally taken from the *properties and operations* of the God-head, which were clear and invincible demonstrations of it. No proof can be more clear and cogent then this, and we may venture to say, that the conviction which arises from the information of sight or any other of our Senses is not more full and more satisfactory. For that the *properties* flow from the *essence*, and can neither be *separated* from it, nor *communicated* to any other, is a self-evident principle, as plain and as certain as that the whole is greater then the part.

To apply this to our present purpose: First then I say, that God is a Being of *infinite perfections*, this is included in the very notion of a God, and therefore it need not, neither indeed can it be proved: it being a primary proposition and therefore indemonstrable *a priori*. 2dly, That *wisdom* and *power* are perfections, and therefore necessarily belong to God. 3dly, That these

these *perfections* must belong to him in the highest degree, or rather they must be in him in such a manner as to exceed all degrees, not enclosed within any bounds or knowing any limits, but truly and properly *infinite*. 4thly, That these *boundless perfections* as they doe *certainly*, so they can *only* belong to God, they cannot flow from, nor reside in any nature but what is *infinite*. 5thly, That these before-named perfections of *power and wisdom* belong to, and are truly found in our Saviour.

Perhaps it will be said, that the *Socinians* will not admit the former Propositions as we have laid them down, having in their Writings delivered several bold and dangerous positions in opposition to the *Infinite nature and perfections* of God Almighty, as we have formerly observed. It is true they have done so, but however they have ascribed the before-named perfections of *power and wisdom* to God, in a very *high*, tho not in a *strictly infinite* degree; and in the same degree have they acknowledged them to belong to our Saviour: upon which account they are content he should be owned to be *Omnipotent* and *Omniscient* in an equal manner with his Father. Nay they contend for it as for a necessary and important truth, because without those *perfections* he could not exercise that immense Authority with which he is entrusted, particularly over *his Church*, and over every other part of the Creation likewise, upon the account, and for *the sake and benefit* of his Church.

And this acknowledgment is sufficient for our purpose, to make this Inference in the last place from the foregoing premisses, *viz.* that since our Saviour is possessed of the above named perfections, which are the *attributes and properties* of the Godhead, that then he must undoubtedly and inevitably be God. This consequence tho flowing naturally and necessarily from these premisses, is very boldly but absurdly, according to their custom, denied by the *Socinians*, which denial they ground upon this supposition, that these absolutely infinite perfections (for so they are content sometimes to call them, tho in contradiction to some of their other former impious assertions) are *primarily and originally* only in God, and but *secondarily* in our Saviour, and by way of *communication* from his

his Father. This we can very readily grant, and therein would come to an agreement with them, provided that they would allow, that the *Divine Nature* was communicated likewise to him from his Father, with those *Divine perfections*, without which it is impossible that they should be *derived* from God, or *received* by him; founded in the nature of a *property*, as we said before, *viz.* that it cannot be separated from the *essence*, nor communicated to any other: and to affirm the contrary is a downright contradiction to the nature of things. And we may as well say, that the properties of an *Animal* may be communicated to a *Plant*, or those of a *Plant* to a *Stone* or any other being; which must entirely overthrow the *nature*, and take away all *distinction* between things, and thereby bring an Universal disorder and confusion into the world.

In short, from what hath been said it seems to be plain, that our *Socinians* must either renounce the position laid down by them, *viz.* That our Saviour is possessed of infinite knowledge and power, or else they must acknowledg him to be truly and properly God. The former they cannot doe without denying him to be the *Messiah*, and thereby renouncing the *Christian Religion*, as they themselves confess. The latter they will not doe, in expresse contradiction to that reason, which at other times they invest with a *Supremacy* in the affairs of Religion. For reason will tell them that Christ must be God if possessed of the *Attributes* of the *Godhead*. They say no, because, as we affirmed from them before, these *properties* doe not flow from his *nature*, but are owing to *Divine grace and favour*. On the other hand when we reply, that our Saviour, if he be but a *meer man*, is not capable of those *divine perfections*, and therefore they cannot be communicated to him; to confirm their former position, they fly to the *Omnipotent power* of God, which is able to work *Miracles*, and, if what they say be true, to doe what in other cases hath been adjudged even by themselves *impossible* to be done.

And why may not the *Papists* be allowed the like privilege, of sheltering themselves under the same *Omnipotence*, when they affirm the *Ubiquity of Christs Body*, and the *sepa-*

ration of accidents from their proper subjects in the Sacrifice of the Mass. They'll say these things imply a plain contradiction, and therefore cannot come within the compass of any power. Be it soe : And may not we be allowed to affirm the same of this position of theirs, that it is *absolutely impossible*, because it overthrows the nature of things, and, which is the greatest of all *Contradictions*, if there are degrees of them, in that it leaves us no way to distinguish between *God and Man*.

This I have endeavoured in some measure to make out in the third part of the *Preservative*, p. 58. 65. &c. and thither I refer the Reader, to save the trouble of transcribing those passages, which he may find there. But forasmuch as our Adversaries still charge the Article of the *God-head* of our Savior, with *multifarious and palpable Contradictions*, and therefore often compare it with *Transubstantiation* in point of error and absurdity ; I shall make bold to turn their own Artillery upon them, and doubt not to shew, that the Contradictions which they falsely ascribe to the *old Article* of Christs *real and natural God-head*, doe truly and properly belong to their *new doctrine* of his *fictitious Divinity*, which is encumbered with so many difficulties, that greater and more flagrant absurdities doe not attend the famous Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*.

The first absurdity of which is this, that they who assert this Doctrine of the change of the Elements in the *Eucharist*, are fain to separate the *accidents* from their *proper Subjects*, that is, the *Color, Taste, Smell* and other qualities from the Bread and Wine, in contradiction to sense and natural reason. So here, the *Socinians* separate the *divine power and wisdom* from the *divine nature*, which is equally opposite to the known principles of reason.

It will be said, that it is true they doe so, but yet they doe not separate them so, as to make them *subsist by themselves* without any subject, as the *Papists* doe the accidents in the *Sacrament* : but they only affirm them to be *communicated* from one subject to another, *viz.* from *God to Man*. I Answer, This will neither solve nor soften the difficulty ; which must continue where it did before. For the absurdity which attends

tends the separation of the accidents in *Transubstantiation* consists in two things. First, That thereby the accidents are divided from their *proper subject*, as we said before; which we say is impossible. And whether these accidents *subsist by themselves*, or are said to be *communicated* to any other subject, the difficulty will still remain. For if the *Color, Taste, Smell, &c.* which belong to *Bread and Wine*, may be conveyed to the *Body and Blood of Christ*, or any other subject, then there is an end put to all certainty of sense, which can judge of things only by their qualities and properties, and if they can be mistaken here, they can be sure of nothing.

The second difficulty that attends the *Popish* separation of accidents in the Sacrament, is indeed, that the accidents are made to *subsist by themselves* without any subject, which is against the nature of an accident. And this difficulty, or impossibility if you please, doth likewise inseparably adhere to the *Socinian* Doctrine of the *communication* of the Divine properties. You'll say how so? doe not the *Socinians* affirm these perfections to be inherent in the nature of Christ? They doe so, it's true, but their affirmation cannot alter the nature of things: and in short, they affirm what is impossible to be true. For the *humane nature* of Christ can no more be capable of the *divine perfections*, then the *Body and Blood* of Christ can be of the *properties of Bread and Wine*. Nay the former difficulty seems to be the greater of the two: because it seems to be more repugnant to reason, to conceive that a *Finite Being* should receive the *boundless perfections* of an *Infinite Being*; then that one *Created finite Being*, such as are the *Body and Blood* of Christ, should admit of the *limited properties* of another *finite Being*, such as are the *Bread and Wine* in the Sacrament.

Indeed in both cases there are *Impossibilities*; founded in the certainty of two *self evident Principles*, the contrary of which contain downright Contradictions. 1st, That nothing can be *Communicated* which is absolutely *incommunicable*; such as are the *properties* of all Beings, because such a communication is repugnant to, and destructive of the natures of those Beings. 2^{dly}, That nothing can *actually possess* what it hath no *capaci-*

ty to receive, that is, one nature the *propertis* of another, and much less a *finite* nature, *infinite* *perfections*. Neither can the *Omnipotence* of God any more relieve the *Socinians*, then it can the *Papists*. For what is impossible, cannot be the object of *Omnipotence* it self: and there Opinion is clogged with these two *Impossibilities*, *viz.* that God can *doe* that which is *impossible to be done*; And that Man can *possess* that which he cannot *possibly receive*.

The second Contradiction which accompanies *Transubstantiation* is, that it makes the same thing to be both *Finite* and *Infinite*; a *Finite Body* such as is that of Christ to have an *Infinite presence*. The same difficulty attends this *Socinian* notion, which makes our Saviours Soul, which must be *Finite* if he be but a *meer Man*, to be possessed of *Infinite knowledge*: because hereby it must necessarily be both *Finite* and *Infinite*.

You will say, it is not so in the same respect, It is *Finite* as to its *Essence*, but *Infinite* as to *Knowledge and Power*. I Ans. this difference of respect can make no alteration in the case: because what is *Finite* must be so in *every respect*, as to what concerns its nature; that is, its *powers, capacities, properties*, and the *operations* which flow from them must be all so likewise. As on the other hand what is *Infinite*, must have all its *faculties*, and *attributes* equally boundless and unlimited. And therefore the former answer will no more relieve the *Socinians* then it will the *Papists*, who may guard themselves from the charge of a contradiction by saying, that the Body of Christ in the Sacrament is still *Finite* with respect to its *dimensions*, tho *Infinite* as to its *presence*, which at first view appears so ridiculous a distinction that it will not easily be allowed.

Thirdly, In *Transubstantiation* the Body of Christ is acknowledged to be *circumscribed*, both within its *own dimensions*, I mean its own internal ones (for so the Patrons of this Doctrine distinguish them) which it still retains in the *Host*, and consequently *in the Host* it self: the whole and entire Body of Christ being enclosed within the species of Bread and Wine. And yet at the same time they make it *uncircumscribed* with relation to place, for it may be in *more Hosts*, and consequently

quently in *more places* than one, and those at vast distances, as distant from each other as the *East* is from the *West*, and indeed as *Heaven* is from the *Earth*.

The like absurdity attends this *Socinian Doctrine*, which makes the knowledge and power of Christ to be so immense, that they cannot be *Circumscribed* within any limits, and yet at the same time they *confine* them within the narrow bounds of his Soul, as the Soul it self is enclosed within the Body. Either then they must say, that this *Infinite knowledge* of Christ hath *no subject* in which it *inheres*, which is the true and necessary consequence of their Opinion; (For they say that he hath no *Divine nature*, and we say and are sure, that these unlimited perfections cannot reside in his *humane nature*, which is not capable of receiving them,) or else they must affirm those qualities to be *Finite*, forasmuch as they are inclosed in a nature which is *Finite*. But since they are not willing to acknowledge either of these two things, they must be content to have it laid to their charge, that they make the same thing to be *circumscribed* and *uncircumscribed*, *limited* and *unlimited*, which is a plain Contradiction.

Nay I may rise one degree higher, and affirm, that according to their Opinion these perfections before named, as *immense* as they are, yet must be brought within a much narrower compass than that of the *whole Soul*, even of a *single Atome* of it. For as the Body of Christ in the *Sacrament* is supposed by the *Papists* to be *whole* and *entire* in every the least particle of Bread; so it must be here. For since the Soul of Christ is, as our Adversaries believe, *material*, and consequently *composed of parts*, which parts I suppose they will allow to be *Homogeneous*, the question then will arise, whether these perfections reside *wholly* in the *whole Soul*, and *wholly in every part*, according to the old Opinion of the Souls presence in the Body; (which how many difficulties soever it may be encumbered with, yet is more agree-

1 *Wolzog*. Acknowledges that the Dominion and Power with which Christ is now invested in Heaven, is *Imperium illimitatum*; that he hath *potestatem prorsus divinam quæ nullis limitibus circumscripta est*.

able to reason, then their Doctrine of the *materiality* and *extension* of it.) Or whether *one degree* of them be in *one part* of the Soul, another be in another, and the *whole in the whole*. If they say the latter, then I must tell them that these perfections whether they will or no, must be *Finite*, because *ten thousand Finites*, and let them multiply that by *ten Millions* if they please, can never make up *one Infinite*.

They will say, this knowledge, and so power, in Christ is not strictly and properly *Infinite*. However, they say, they are in him in such a manner, as that he may be truly styled *Omnipotent and Omniscient*; (which one would think should be *tantamount* to *Infinite*) and then I will affirm, that a hundred thousand *impotent parts* when joyned together cannot make up one *Omnipotent whole*: Nor as many, tho never so *knowing and intelligent Atomes*, let them be in what position and endued with what textures you please, provided they *know but in part*, make up one *All-wise, Omniscient Soul*. If they say the former, then they must allow, which will aggravate the absurdity of their notion, that these perfections in Christ, which sometimes they say know *no limits*, are, I will not say, *confined*, but however doe reside within so narrow a compass, *viz.* the least particle of the Soul, that we want words to express, neither indeed can our imaginations conceive, the *littleness of it*. This is the first argument by which the Apostles prove the Divinity of our Saviour, *viz.* by the *properties* of the God-head.

The 2d. proof is taken from the *works and operations* which they ascribe to him, which are such as can be performed by none but only by God. I shall instance but in one, and that is the *Creation* of the material World, *the Heavens and the Earth and all things in them*, which by our Adversaries is acknowledged to be a work *purely Divine*, which therefore, if it be truly affirmed of our Saviour, must be a clear demonstration of his

1 Socinus tells us that this power of Christ is *prorsus singularis & divina*. It is *in suo genere infinita & Omnipotens*, That Christ was equal to his Father, *quam æqualitatem ad potentiam operandi referri debet*. See these and the foregoing passages cited at large in the 3d Part of the Preservative p. 59, 60. 68. 71.

God-head. The words of Scripture which I shall produce to this purpose are those taken out of the 1 Coll. 16, 17. *For by him all things are Created that are in Heaven and that are in Earth, Visible and Invisible, whether they be Thrones, or Dominions, or Principalities, or Powers; all things were created by him and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.* In which words the *Creation* of all things is in plain and direct expressions ascribed to our Saviour.

Our Adversaries to avoid the force of them, betake themselves to *Tropes and Figures*, their great *Sanctuary* to which they usually retreat, when hard pressed by the plain words and letter of the Scripture. Let us now fairly examine this matter, and then let every unprejudiced man judge whether is to be preferred, their *Figurative*, or our *Literal* Interpretation of this Text. But before I proceed to doe so, I must crave leave to premise these following particulars.

First that a *probable sense* of Scripture is allways to be preferred before one that is *barely possible*. 2dly, That that interpretation is most likely and *probable*, which is, *first*, countenanced by the *Phrase and Letter*, especially when that is found agreeable to the *design* of the place, the *scope* of the writer, the *Context*, that is the passages going before or coming after. 2dly, Which is confirmed by *parallel expressions* in other places of Scripture. 3dly, That which Universally and in all Ages hath been entertained by all wise and good men; such as were likely to be guarded from mistake (if any thing could secure them from it) by their *Wisdom, Learning, Piety, Caution, Sincerity, Industry*, and all other good qualities which might dispose and enable them to find out the true meaning of the Scriptures. 4thly, That which hath been received both by *Friends and Enemies*, to the Doctrine it self; that is, by all *unprejudiced persons*, who had eyes in their heads and could read, and had capacities to understand the words; who have all agreed in the same sense and meaning of them: all which will amount to a Moral Demonstration.

Especially in the last place, if the words cannot otherwise be understood without using an apparent force, by bending
and

and perverting them by remote and unusual Figures, and thereby furnishing the World with an *uncommon, harsh, and unnatural Exposition*. For by these means the force of all other passages of Scripture, how *plain and clear* soever they may be thought, may be *eluded*. And then nothing will be left *certain* in these Writings, but *Scepticism, Doubting and Confusion* must universally prevail; which will not only be an infinite disparagement to the Scriptures themselves, but the dishonor and scandal must spread farther, and affect the *Inspired Authors and Pen-men* themselves, as we shall shew by and by.

These things being premised, I say that all these requisites before mentioned are to be found in the common and received Exposition of this Text, which therefore renders it so *highly probable* as to make it likewise *certain*. For 1st, It is countenanced by the *words* and is *expressly* delivered in them. *By him all things were Created, &c.* Which is further supported by the scope of the place, and design of St. Paul; which was to magnify the redemption and deliverance wrought for us by our Saviour, which he doth principally from the Consideration of the *dignity and excellency of his Person*, styled v. 13. the *dear Son of God*, or the *Son of his Love*: And because a Son, he must be the *Image of the Invisible God*, viz. the Father, v. 15. the *express representation or character of his Person*, as he is said to be Heb. 1. v. 3. by which it appears that he was the *true, proper and natural Son of God*, and not only so by *Adoption*; which is a noble instance of the superlative love of God to mankind, that he would thus part with *his only begotten Son*, and send him into the World to accomplish the Deliverance and Salvation of it.

Again being the *proper and natural*, he must likewise be the *Eternal Son of God, Begotten of his Father before all Worlds*, as the *Nicene Creed* expresses it: or as the Apostle words it, in the same verse, he is the *first born of every Creature*; *πρωτότοκος*, i. e.

1 Indeed the word *πρωτότοκος* is otherwise rendred by several Learned men, who think it is used here by the Apostle not in a *proper but figurative sense*, by a *Metonymie* of the Antecedent for the Consequent; and therefore by the *first born of every Creature*, is, they say, meant that he is

Dominus

i. e. *πρὸ πάντων κτισμάτων*; Begotten before any part of the Creation. And indeed he must necessarily be supposed to have a Being before any other Creature, and therefore to be the Lord and Heir of all things, Heb. 1. 2. For this clear and irrefragable reason, because he is both the efficient and final cause of all things. *ὅτι*, For by him, saith the Apostle, all things were Created that are in Heaven and that are in Earth, &c. All these things were Created by him, and for him. This preexistence is repeated again in the following ver. And he is before all things, which as they at first received their being from his power who Created them, so they owe their preservation and continuance in it to his Providence: and by him all things, *συνίστησι*, Consist or are supported. Agreeable to which is said Heb. 1. 3. That he upholds all things by the word of his power.

But 2^{dly}, As the literal and generally received exposition is agreeable to the context and design of this place, so it is confirmed by other parallel places. Doth the Apostle here say, that all things were Created *ἐν αὐτῷ* i. e. *δι' αὐτῶν* by him? so doth the same St. Paul tells us 1 Cor. 8. v. 6. that he is that one Lord *δι' ὃν τὰ πάντα*, by whom are all things. And so doth St. Jo. in his Gospel 1. ch. 3. v. *πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο*. All things were made by him.

Again, doth the Apostle in this Text say, That all things were Created not only by him, *δι' αὐτῶν*, but likewise *εἰς αὐτὸν*, for him? This is affirmed of God the Father, and made the description of the Supreme God, that *δι' αὐτῶν, καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα*, by him, and for him are all things, Rom. 11. 36. And Heb. 2. 10. He is said to be *δι' ὃν, propter quem*, (for so the Proposition *δι'* signifies when joyned with the Accusative case) and *δι' ὃν per quem*, (that being its signification when joyned with the Genitive,) for whom, and by whom are all things.

Dominus & Heres, Lord and Heir of the whole Creation, which he truly is. But this Exposition is so far from overthrowing the first and literal signification, that it necessarily includes it. For this Dominion and Heirship, is a consequence of Primogeniture and founded in it. *Primogenitus, apud Hebræos, fratrum suorum dominus, & familiæ velut princeps, & hæres omnium bonorum paternorum. Quin & Latinis Heres pro Domino accipitur, ut in Justin. Instit. Lib. 2. Tit. 119. Sic Camero in Loc.*

The Argument then runs thus, *He who made all things is God.* A Doctrine expressly and absolutely, without any limitation, delivered by the Apostle *Heb. 3. v. 4.* But it is as expressly and peremptorily affirmed by the Apostles, *that all things were Made and Created by Christ*, and therefore he is the *True God.* Again, *He by whom and for whom*, or for whose sake and glory, *all things were made*, he is the *Supreme God.* For this by the Apostles is made the description and character of him, in the places above mentioned. But the same is likewise affirmed by them of our Saviour Christ, *that all things were Created δι' αὐτοῦ ἔκ εἰς αὐτὸν*, by him and for him: By which phrase he is made the *efficient* and *final cause* of the production of all things; and therefore he must be the *supreme God.*

Neither can it be here said, that when these words are spoken of *God the Father*, they are to be taken *properly*; but when applied to *Christ*, they are to be understood *Metaphorically*, there being no ground nor warrant for any such distinction. For all the words which are made use of to express either the *action* of *Creation*, or the *object* and *Effect* of it (the ἐνέργεια or the ἐνέργημα, scil. τὸ τῆς ἐνέργειας ἀποτέλεσμα; as they are distinguished by the Greeks, vid. *Damascen Lib. 3. Orthodox. Fid.*) are equally applied to *God the Father* and our Savior *Christ.* And therefore by the same Figures by which our Adversaries would despoil our *Savior* of this dignity and power, they may rob *God the Father* of the honor likewise of being the *Creator* of the world.

The words made use of in Scripture to denote the *Creation* of the material world by *God the Father*, are principally these three, *viz. ποιέω, κτίζω, γίνομαι*. And these are made use of likewise to express that *Creation* which is affirmed of the *Son.* Thus in the following places, πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο 1 Jo. 3. ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, v. 10. Ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα, and again, τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται, 1 Col. 16. Δι' ἧ καὶ αὐτὸν αἰῶνας ἐποίησεν, 1 Heb. 2. In which place *God the Father* is said to *make the worlds*, but it is by *his Son*: for the Scriptures do declare, and all good Christians from the beginning have acknowledged a *sacred Oeconomy* among the Persons in the blessed Trinity.

Particu-

Particularly the Creation of the world is ascribed to God the Father as his proper work, who therefore is styled in *contradistinction* to the Son and Holy Ghost, the *Creator of the World*; yet he is said to *Create all things by his Word*, not as that signifies only his *command and pleasure*, but as it denotes his own *eternal, substantial word*, living and subsisting in and with him, being of the *same nature and essence* with himself. Of the *same nature*, I say, but yet so, that he hath not that nature *originally of himself* but by *communication* from his Father, being his natural and eternal Son; therefore he is said to act by a *power* communicated likewise to him from his Father. For saith he, Jo. 5. 18. *The Son can do nothing of himself but what he seeth the Father doe.* But notwithstanding this disparity in the way and manner of acting, there is no difference or inequality, as to the *principle and power of acting*; For what things soever the Father doth, these also doth the Son likewise, in the same ver. And it is no wonder that he should do so, forasmuch as *He and the Father are one*, Jo. 10. 33.

In short, that God the Father made the world, is a principle of *natural Religion*: so St. Paul assures us Rom. 1. 20. *That the invisible things of God from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead.* And the Holy Psalmist, long before him, affirmed the same thing, when he said, that the *Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his handy work*, Ps. 19. 1. But that he made the World by his own eternal Son, the word and wisdom of the Father, is a truth made known by Revelation. For by ¹ *Faith we understand that the worlds were made by the word of God*, Heb. 11. 3.

In the Greek indeed it is *ᾠμῶντι Ἰᾱ*, which may be thought to denote

¹ *It is true indeed the Creation of the world by God the Father, may be styled a Doctrine of Faith, in another sense, viz. as it signifies the production of all things out of nothing. And so in this very place, the Apost: tells us, that it is by Faith that we understand that the things which are seen, were made, μὴ ἐκ φανερομένων, of things which do not appear; that is, out of nothing: for ex non apparentibus, is the same here as ex non extantibus.*

denote only the *power and command of God*: but since St. John in his Gospel, and St. Peter 2 *Epis.* 3. *ch.v.* 5. assure us that it was the *λόγος* by which God made the *Heavens and the Earth*, that is, the whole world; it is but reasonable to think that *ῥῆμα* there is used in this sense by the Apostle, to denote the *λόγος*: and so it is more than once by Philo¹, as when he saith, *ἀλλὰ ῥήματος ἔκ αὐτοῦ μετανίσταται*, (He speaks of the Translation of Moses) *δι' ἧ καὶ σύμπας κόσμος ἐδημιουργεῖτο*; which *ῥῆμα* is that² *λόγος*, which in his writings he every where speaks of as of a Person; and particularly that *by him God made the world*: which is no more than what he learnt from the *Psalmist*, who tells us, that *by the word of the Lord were the Heavens made, and all the Host of them by his Spirit, or the breath of his Mouth*, *Pf.* 33. 6.

This was the generally received Opinion of the Antient Jews, clearly delivered in the Books of *Wisdom* and *Ecclesiasticus*, the *Chaldee Paraphrases*, Philo; whose Testimonies (That the Reader may not be at the trouble to hunt for Authorities to this purpose out of *Raimundus, Galatinus, Rittangelius, &c.*) may be seen at large in a judicious Book not long since published, Entitled the *Judgment of the Jewish Church against the Unitarians*. What was thus plainly enough delivered in the *Old Testament*, and accordingly believed, as we see, in the *Ancient Jewish Church*, is yet more clearly revealed in the *New*; and therefore constantly and uniformly believed by all Christians in the first and earliest Ages next after the Apostles days; never denied by any but *Simon Magus* and his

extantibus. This was a Doctrine which natural reason did not inform men of, and therefore the production of things out of nothing, was generally at least, if not universally denied by the Antient Philosophers: followed herein by some Antient Hereticks, and some Modern ones likewise, viz. Socinus and his Disciples, who to fill up the number of their Errors have espoused this Paganish Opinion, which makes up part of their Creed.

¹ De Sacrif. Abel p. 102.

² *ἵνα μάθῃς ὅτι τὸν σοφὸν ἰσότητων κόσμον ὁ θεὸς ἤγαγε, καὶ αὐτῷ λόγῳ καὶ τὸ πᾶν ἐργαζόμενον, καὶ τὸ τέλειον ἀνάγων εἰς ἑαυτὸν.* Ibid. in which places *ῥῆμα* and *λόγος* are promiscuously used to denote the same thing.

Disciples the *Gnosticks*, or other *notorious Hereticks*, branded for such, as we shall shew by and by.

But 2dly, as the words used to express the *action of Creation*, so likewise the words made choice of to declare the *object of it*, are equally in the Scriptures applyed to God the Father, and his Son our Savior Christ. First in general, *all things are said to be made by him*, Jo. 1. 3. *The world was made by him*, v. 10. *that is*, the whole world, without exception of any part of it, *for without him was not any thing made that was made*, v. 3. Nay, this is not only affirmed of our Savior in general, but when the Scriptures come to enumerate particulars, and to instance in those principal parts into which, by the most comprehensive division, the world is wont to be resolved, *viz. the Heavens and the Earth*, they tell us that these owe their Being and Original to him. For *He laid the foundation of the one, and the others are the work of his hands*, Heb. 1. 10. Thus the same Divine writer tells us, that *God made or framed τὰς αἰῶνας the Worlds by his word*, Heb. 11. 3. and if you would know what or who that word was, he will inform you in the 1 ch. 2. v. that it was *the Son of God*, δι' ἧς καὶ τὰς αἰῶνας ἐποίησεν; by whom he made the *Worlds*, that is, according to the known division made of them by the Jews, into the *Inferior and Superior world*, the *Heavens and the Earth*.

But 3dly, if this be not sufficient, we have not only a distribution of the world into its principal parts, but a farther enumeration of all Beings contained in them, which likewise owe their Original to his power. For as it is said of God, *That he made the Heavens and the Earth and all that in them is*, Exod. 20. 11. So 1 Col. 16. *All things are said to be Created by the Son of God, that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, visible and invisible*. Particularly the Inhabitants of the highest Heavens, who are placed out of the reach of our sight, the holy Angels of all ranks and orders, *whether they be Thrones or Dominions or Principalities and Powers*, all these were Created by him and for him. These indeed were omitted in the History of the Creation given us by Moses, and therefore least they should be thought exempt from the Creation ascribed to the Son,

Son, they are here by the Apostle particularly and fully expressed, that thereby we might be informed, that all the whole entire Creation, without exception of any of the most glorious parts of it, have an essential dependance upon the Son of God, who is *Heir of all things*, by whose power and for whose glory all these things were Created; *All things were Created by him and for him.*

Lastly if we consider the Creation, if I may so say, with relation to the *point of time*, when it began; as in *Gen. 1.* it is said, that *in the Beginning God Created the Heaven and the Earth* So of this Creation ascribed to the Son, it is said, *thou Lord, κατ' ἀρχάς, in the Beginning hast laid the foundation of the Earth, &c.* which are the words of *David Ps. 102. 25.* but expressly applied to our Savior by the Apostle *Heb. 1. 10.* So in *St. John* ἐν ἀρχῇ, in the same beginning mentioned by *Moses*, when God made the Heaven and the Earth, *then the word was with God, and all things were made by him.* This word which was likewise the wisdom of God, was from Everlasting, from the Beginning, ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸ τῆς γῆς ποιήσαι, *Prov. 8. 23.* Before any of his works of Old, before the Earth was, or the Heavens were prepared, this word or wisdom was with the Lord, ἡμην παρ' αὐτῷ, *1. e. κυρίῳ, v. 28.* possessed by him in the beginning of his way, *v. 22.* which are the same expressions used by *St. John*, ὁ λόγος ὢν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, *ch. 1. v. 2.* and therefore to be sure were designed by both Writers to denote the same thing.

Thus we see how the *literal exposition* of this Text in the *Col.* is found agreeable to, and therefore fully confirmed by other numerous and plain passages of Scripture: and tho each particular Text produced to this purpose be clear enough, and therefore sufficient to convince any unprejudiced mind; yet the light that arises from them all together must afford such a lustre as cannot be resisted but by willfully shutting ones eyes against it. In short, tho it should be allowed (tho I know no reason why any such concession should be made) that the passages before mentioned taken *singly, by themselves*, are not so cogent and concluding as to force an assent, yet considering that the Inspired Writers make use of the same Words and Phrases, and

and a *uniform way* of expressing themselves about this matter, which we are now speaking of, which cannot without great force and violence be perverted to another meaning; we cannot but acknowledge that when we take them *all together* they must yield an irresistible proof; otherwise, if we may be allowed to put a *new and forreign sense* on the plainest passages of Scripture, the whole frame of our Religion will be hereby altered, and the *Bible* rendered the most obscure, intricate Book that ever was published, and therefore fit, as we said before, to be laid aside and rejected on all hands.

3dly, That which renders the *literal exposition* of this place highly probable, is, that it hath been generally received by all good Christians in all Ages, and particularly by those who lived in the Ages next that of the Apostles, and who may be presumed best to know their meaning, as having received the *words of Scripture* from them, and likewise *the interpretation thereof*; I mean in those *great Articles* of their Faith, among which, the *Creation of the material World* by the power of him, whom they owned to be the *Son and word of God*, was allways reputed. Allways, I say, from the first and earliest Ages of the Christian Church, as far as we have any records of these matters.

The Testimonies of *Barnabas, Justin, Athenagoras, Tatian, Theophilus, Irenæus*, and *Tertullian*, may be seen in *Grotius* his Commentaries on the first of *John*. Among these he hath omitted *Hermas*, and *Clemens Alexandrinus*: the former tho not of that undoubted authority as the others, yet is owned by *Grotius* to be *vetustatis primæ*, and to have wrote before *Irenæus* and *Clemens*, who cite certain passages out of him. And none can express themselves more clearly and fully upon this point, then these Antient Writers doe. Not now to reckon up the

I *Filius quidem Dei omni creatura antiquior est, ita ut in consilio patri suo adfuerit ad condendam creaturam.* Herm. Similitudine nona.

By *Clemens of Alexand.* the Son and Word of God is every where styled *ἰμωγενὴς, ἰμωγενὴς αἰνός. ὁ ἰμωγενήσας τὸν ἀνθρώπον. ὃ τὰ πάντα διέημωγενται. ἀρχὴ δὲ τοῦ πάντων, &c.* *Hæc, atque alia ejusdem generis passim occurrunt in illius scriptis, in Pædag. Admon. Strom.*

Fathers

Fathers that succeeded in the third Century down to the Council of Nice, whose Testimonies may be seen in *Calovius*, Dr. *Bull* and others: and thither I choose to refer the Reader, rather than cumber these Papers with many quotations, which are so often repeated by all Writers who treat of these matters.

Now in these Testimonies of the Fathers, we shall find not only that they all firmly believed this Doctrine to be true, but likewise to be one of the *primary and important truths* of the Christian Religion; by which they both *prove* the truth of other Fundamental doctrines, and *confute* the dangerous errors that then were broached by certain Hereticks, by which they endeavoured to undermine the very foundations of the Christian Religion.

First, that *Christ is God*, is one of the great Doctrines of Christianity, believed by all good Christians from the first Ages of the Church, because plainly delivered in the Scriptures: yet not so much placed beyond all Caviel, as this of the *Creation* of the World by him; and therefore this latter is made use of by the *Fathers*, as a *principle and medium* by which they prove his *Divinity*. Not now to mention the opinion of single *Fathers*, we shall find they did so by *joint suffrage* when they met in *Synods and Councils*, which adds greater weight and authority to this their Argumentation.

Thus the Bishops assembled at *Antioch* against *Paulus Samosatenus*, in the *Synodical Epistle* which they published upon this occasion, Preface the Confession of their Faith with this declaration, that what they believed concerning the Divinity of Christ, was no other then *what they received from their Ancestors, delivered down from the Apostles, and allways preserved in the Ca-*

I Profitentur se fidem edere & exponere, quam à principio acceperunt & haberent traditam & servatam in Ecclesia Catholica à beatis Apostolis, qui viderunt ipsi, & ministri fuerunt verbi, &c. Addunt, omnes divinæ Scripturæ Deum filium Dei declarant. Hunc filium, qui semper cum patre est, credimus implevisse voluntatem paternam in Creatione universi, ipse enim dixit & facta sunt, ipse mandavit & creata sunt. Vid. quæ sequuntur in eadem Epist.

tholick

tholick Church to their times. And not being content barely to declare their Faith, they prove it from Scripture, and particularly from those places, *viz.* 1 *Gen.* 1. in which the *formation of Man*, and 1 *Jo.* 3. *Col.* 1. 16. in which the *Creation of the World* is ascribed to him.

The same method was taken in the great *Council of Nice*, wherein this truth was established and inserted in the solemn confession of Faith agreed upon by the *Fathers* there met, it being one of the great arguments that had been made use of by them to prove the Son to be *Coeternal* and *Coessential* with the Father. This Argument was so clear and cogent for the *preexistence* of our Savior, and that he was concerned in the *true and proper Creation* of the World, that the *Arians* neither could nor durst deny it; for the notion of a *Metaphorical Creation* never entered into their Heads: but the inference thence made concerning the eternal Divinity of our Savior, they endeavored to evade by saying, that he had a hand indeed in that great work, but yet only as an *instrumental* and *inferior*, but not as a *principal Agent*. The folly and falshood of which suggestion was made sufficiently to appear by the Answers and Arguments of the *Catholicks*, and particularly by *Athanasius* in divers parts of his Works, and especially in his *Orations against the Arians*, where he handles and debates this matter at large, and by clear and irrefragable arguments from Scripture proves that the *World was made by the Son*, who being the *Word*, and *Wisdom*, and *Power* of his Father, must likewise be not *ὑπερβολος* but *δημιουργος*, not an *Organical* but a *Principal Agent* in this Creation.

But 2dly, The *Fathers*, as they made use of it as a *medium* of proving other Truths, so they made it a *Rule* whereby to discern and distinguish between *true Christians* and *Hereticks*, especially those of the first and elder times, among whom *Simon Magus*, *Menander* and *Cerinthus*, affirmed this World to be made by *certain Angels*, and *powers* and *separate Vertues*. This separate Vertue *Cerinthus* owned to be a *sort of a God*, but to be distinct from, and inferior to the chief God: but *Marcion* who came after him, said he was an *Evil being*, and the *Author*

thor of Evil. Now against these and other the like *Hereticks*, who differed indeed in their impious Opinions about the maker of the World, (and therefore *Irenæus* might well say, *licet valde varia & multa dicant Hæretici*) yet they all agreed in this, that it was not made by our Savior; ¹ *Irenæus* sets down this therefore as a *rule* whereby they might be both known and confuted, as having plainly deviated from that great truth so plainly and so frequently delivered by the *Inspired Writers* both of the *Old and New Testament*, viz. that God made the World by his Word and Wisdom, which was his *First begotten and only begotten Son*.

The force of this *proof* taken from the *uniform testimonies* of the Christians of the first Ages, is so great that it must be beyond all contradiction, provided men will be concluded by such proofs in *matters of Religion* as they are content to be governed by in all other *Civil affairs*. For this is not delivered by them as the *private opinion* of one or more particular persons, but as the *constant, universal belief* of all good Christians, revealed in the Scriptures, and delivered down to them from the *Apostles* themselves by a known and uninterrupted Tradition.

Now nothing can be urged to take off the force of this Ar-

1 Cum teneamus autem nos regulam veritatis, i. e. quia sit unus Deus Omnipotens qui omnia condidit per verbum suum, & aptavit & fecit ex eo quod non erat ad hoc ut sint omnia, quemadmodum scriptura dicit, omnia per ipsum facta sunt, & sine ipso factum est nihil: ex omnibus autem nihil subtractum est, sed omnia per ipsum fecit pater, sive visibilia sive invisibilia, sive sensibilia sive intelligibilia, & ea omnia non per angelos, neque per virtutes aliquas abscissas ab ejus sententia; nihil enim indiget Deus sed per verbum & spiritum suum omnia faciens, & disponens, & gubernans, & omnibus esse præstans. Hanc ergo tenentes regulam, licet valde multa & varia dicant Hæretici; facile eos à veritate deviasse arguimus. Iren. Lib. 1. Cap. 19. Omnia igitur talia (de erroribus Cerinthi aliorumque Hæreticorum loquitur) circumscribere volens discipulus domini, & regulam veritatis constituere in Ecclesia; quia est unus Deus Omnipotens, qui per verbum suum fecit omnia, & visibilia & invisibilia. Idem Lib. 3. Cap. XI. & alibi passim.

gument,

gument, but either the supposal of *ignorance* in these men whose authorities we produce, which disabled them from finding out the meaning of the *Apostles* words: Or 2dly, the supposition of *Fraud and Dishonesty* in perverting them against their knowledg. But neither of these can be laid to the charge of these early Writers. For 1st, Many of them were Persons of great Parts and Learning; such as *Irenæus, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Clemens Alexand. Tertullian, &c.* and therefore could not mistake out of weakness and ignorance. But indeed there was no occasion for extraordinary improvements in Learning to enable them to find out the meaning of these passages of Scripture in which the *Creation of the World* is ascribed to our Savior, for they are delivered in such *plain, easy, obvious Expressions* as are suited to the meanest Capacities.

No Truth was ever delivered with *greater simplicity and plainness* of words. *By him all things were Created; that are in Heaven and in Earth, whether Visible or invisible,* saith St. Paul. *All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made,* saith St. John. What Doctrine can possibly be delivered in words more plain and more easy to be understood. Indeed the *figurative sense*, insisted upon by our Adversaries, *lies deep*, and requires more then ordinary skill, even a *profound judgment* to find it out. Nay, I must be bold to say, that *bare Skill* will not be sufficient to this purpose, except it be joined with some other *evil Principle*, such as *Pride, Malice, Obstinacy* and the like, (which have ever been looked upon to be the worst qualifications to enable men to find out or embrace the Truth) and yet must be the only helps that can relieve these men against the *obvious and literal* signification, which is so evident, so natural, that all good Christians before mentioned in the first Ages Construed the *Scriptures* by it.

But they had another help, besides their own skill and knowledge, to find out the meaning of the *Scriptures*, beyond what we now have: some of them being *Apostolical men*, living in the times of the *Apostles* and Conversing with them; such as *Barnabas*, who was himself an Apostle, tho' not one of the 12. *Hermas, Ignatius, Polycarp*; which two last, tho' they do not

any where make exprefs mention of the *Creation* of the world by our Savior, yet they both acknowledge *his Divinity*, which is *tantamount*; these *two Doctrines* being inseparably united, and uncontestable *proofs* of each other.

Others, such as *Justin Martyr* and *Irenæus*, did see and converse with them who conversed with the *Apostles*, and so might easily and without any possibility of mistake receive this *Tradition* from them, they being but in the next Age, and no farther removed from them then the Persons now living are from their *Grand-Fathers*. And they tell us that they did receive it from the *Apostles*, appealing to their ¹ Writings, and to the ² Records which at that time, and long after were kept in the Churches

¹ *Non enim per alios dispositionem salutis nostræ cognovimus, quam per eos per quos Evangelium pervenit ad nos, quod quidem tunc præconia-
verunt, post per Dei voluntatem in Scripturis nobis tradiderunt fundamen-
tum & columnam fidei nostræ futuram. Iren. Lib. 3. Cap. 1. Omnes isti
(scil. Evangelistæ) unum Deum factorem cæli & terræ à lege & prophetis
annunciatum, & unum Christum Dei filium nobis tradiderunt: quibus si
quis non assentit, spernit quidem participes Domini, spernit autem & ip-
sum Dominum Christum, spernit vero & patrem, & est à seipso damnatus,
repugnans & resistens salutis suæ, quod faciunt omnes Hæretici. Id. ibid.*

² *Traditionem itaque Apostolorum in toto mundo manifestatam in Ec-
clesia adest perspicere omnibus qui vera velint audire; & habemus annu-
merare eos qui ab Apostolis instituti sunt Episcopi in Ecclesiis, & succes-
sores eorum usque ad nos, qui nihil tale docuerunt neque cognoverunt quale
ab his (Hæreticis scil.) delineatur. Et postea: Hac Ordinatione & succes-
sione, ea quæ est ab Apostolis in Ecclesia traditio & veritatis præconatio
pervenit usque ad nos. Et est plenissima hæc ostensio, unam & eandem
vivatricem fidem esse, quæ in Ecclesia (scil. Romana) ab Apostolis us-
que nunc sit conservata & tradita in veritate. Id. Cap. 3. Sed quæ est
Ephesi Ecclesia à Paulo quidem fundata, Johanne autem permanente apud
eos usque ad Trajani tempora, testis est verus Apostolorum traditionis. Ibid.
Tantæ igitur ostensiones cum sint hæc, non oportet apud alios quærere veri-
tatem, quam facile est ab Ecclesia sumere: cum Apostoli quasi in dives de-
positorium, plenissime in ea contulerint omnia quæ sint veritatis. Et po-
stea, quid enim, & si de aliqua modica quæstione disceptatio esset, non
oporteret in antiquissimas recurrere Ecclesias in quibus Apostoli conversati
sunt, & ab eis de præsentî quæstione sumere quod certum & liquidum est.
Id. Cap. 4.*

Founded

Founded by the *Apostles*, whose Doctrines and Interpretations of Scripture in these great and fundamental Articles of our Religion, they very carefully and Religiously preserved, and transmitted them down to their Successors. By all which helps they were sufficiently instructed, and freed therefore from *ignorance and mistakes* in these Divine Truths.

And 2dly, For the same and other reasons they must be supposed to be free from any wicked and *fraudulent designs* in perverting the words of the Apostles, and thereby making any *innovation* in this Doctrine; which no man, who hath any knowledge of these men and those times, can possibly believe, who doth not at the same time abandon himself to the belief of all the most unlikely and ridiculous things in the whole world. This will be very evident if we consider either their *Persons*, or the *Doctrine* which they did publish, and the *success* which attended it. In all which the difficulties and absurdities which accompany this *pretended Innovation*, must be so many and so improbable, that if they can be reconciled, I should make no difficulty to affirm, that that *Idle and Senseless Tale* contrived by the *Jews*, to overthrow our *Saviors* Resurrection, (*viz. that while the Souldiers slept, his Disciples came by night and stole his body away*) may be a very *likely and just report*.

First as to the *Persons* of these early Writers, they were men of *Learning, Wisdom and Caution*, celebrated for their *singular Piety*, which discovered it self in their *Charity, Humility, Devotion, Contempt of the world*, and the exercise of all other *Christian graces* which rendered them the Glory of their own, and the wonder of after times; and this character cannot be denied them, our Enemies themselves being judges; by whom they are, as we heard before, styled *Sanctissimi Martyres, Doctrina & pietate clarissimi*. But if they were concerned in this *Innovation* of the Christian Faith, they must come under the quite contrary Character, and be justly esteemed the most *Foolish, Impudent, Wicked Persons* that ever appeared in the world.

First, I say this must be a very *foolish undertaking*, the folly of which could not but be upon many accounts very remarkable. For they could never attempt this *Innovation* without being
presently

presently *discovered*, and upon the discovery *Universally opposed*. This Opinion concerning the *Creation of the world* by our Saviour, which must suppose (as being the clear proof of it) his *Divinity*, if it were *false*, must be a very *dangerous falshood*, such as affected the very *Foundation* of the Christian Religion, and therefore could not be introduced without occasioning an *essential alteration* in the whole frame and contexture of it, as I have formerly shewed, and is acknowledged by our Adversaries. Now so great a change in the Christian Doctrine must upon the first publishing of it *awaken the fears and jealousies* of all such, as had any regard for the *honor of God*, and the *Salvation of mens Souls*, which thereby must be dangerously invaded: upon which account it could not be avoided, but that this wicked design by the *violent and universal opposition* that it would inevitably meet with, must long since have miscarried, even as soon in a manner as attempted.

2dly, It must have hindred the *Propagation* of the Christian Religion which yet was the great work that these good men were entirely engaged in. And their *zeal* herein was so remarkable, that they refused no pains, declined no hazards to promote it. Now to introduce a *new Doctrine* quite contrary to what the *Apostle* had Preached, and consequently had been entertained by *all Churches* planted by them, must needs have hindred the success of all their labors, and thereby have retarded the progress of that Religion which they endeavored to propagate in the world.

In short, instead of being reputed *Preachers* of the *old Gospel*, they would certainly be rejected as *Contrivers* of a *New one*, and therefore esteemed such as deserved, according to the Apostles direction, to be Censured with an *Anathema*: that is, instead of *gathering or confirming Churches*, they must have been cast out of the *Communion of the Faithful*, and looked upon by them as *Cheats and Impostors*. For such was the Custom¹ of those Early

¹ *Quibus si aliquis annuntiaverit ea quæ ab Hæreticis adinventæ sunt, statim concludentes aures longo longius fugient, ne audire quidem sustinentes blasphemum colloquium. Sic per veterem Apostolorum traditionem, ne in conceptionem quidem mentis admittunt quodcunque eorum (Hæreticorum scil.) portentiloquium.* Iren. Lib. 5. Cap. 4.

Times, (Oh that we might find that Pious practice thought worthy of the imitation of ours) when men were influenced more by a just concern and zeal for their Holy Religion, then by those empty tho' popular pretences to peace and moderation, &c. that if any came and Preached a Doctrine contrary to what was delivered by the Apostles, they immediately *shut their ears, and fled from them with all the hast they could make, not being able to hear with any patience these Blasphemies against their Holy Religion.* And yet these senseless men (the Fathers before mentioned) still persisted to Preach this New Doctrine, which would inevitably have hindred the success of all their Labors, which therefore must be a very foolish undertaking; and what must be the highest pitch of folly in the world, they laid down their Lives in Confirmation of it, Dying *Martyrs* to a known Falshood and Forgery, exposing themselves to the *greatest infamy*, which is due to Impostors in this Life; besides *Eternal Damnation* in the next.

But the *Impudence* of the attempt must be *Transcendent*, surpassing every thing but the folly and wickedness of it. For they who are supposed to deal thus treacherously with the Holy writings, perverting the known and established meaning of them (as our Adversaries would have it believed) among all Christians; yet in *all Cases* which concerned Religion, and particularly in *this Case* in which they are supposed to make this *scandalous Innovation*, still refer their Disciples¹ for direction to these *Holy Scriptures* which they make the *sole rule of their Faith*; and to that *Interpretation* of them, which they say was delivered down² to them

¹ In principio Deus fecit coelum & terram. *Adoro scripturae plenitudinem, quae mihi factorem manifestat & facta. In Evangelio vero amplius & ministrum & arbitrum rectoris invenio Sermonem. Scriptum esse doceat Hermogenis Officina, (Omnia scil. facta esse ex subjacenti aliqua materia, quod asserbat Hermogenes) si non est scriptum, timeat vae illud adjicientibus aut detrahentibus destinatum.* Tertul. adversus Herm. Cap. 22.

² *Arguuntur isti (Haeretici scil.) non quidem Apostolorum sed suae male sententiae esse Discipuli, propter hoc autem & variae sententiae sunt unusquisque*

them from the Apostles by a near and an unquestionable *Tradition*; which was carefully preserved in those Churches planted by them, and to which in all *Disputes* they *Appeal*, being content themselves, and requiring all others to be governed and concluded by it. Now what Opinion could the world have of such Men when they compared these *declarations*, (so often and so earnestly upon all occasions made, concerning the *excellency of the Holy Scriptures*, and that *Religious and Conscientious regard* which every Christian ought to have for them) with those *Scriptures themselves*; which if our Adversaries are to be believed, are so directly opposite to each other.

They could not do otherwise then judge them to be in the third place, the most *wicked* as well as *foolish* men that ever were in the world. For if they could once, upon any consideration whatsoever, be engaged in so wicked a design as to pervert the *words of the Apostles*, in order to establish a new and dangerous error; and then under the cover of *their authority* shelter this Innovation, and all this against their knowledge and convictions; then it must follow from hence, that the true Character of these men is, that they were Persons of nei-

unusquisque eorum recipientes errorem quemadmodum capiebat; Ecclesia vero per universum mundum ab Apostolis firmum habens initium, in una & eadem de Deo & filio ejus perseverat sententia. Iren. Lib. 3. Cap. 12. p. 163. Age jam qui curiositatem vobis melius exercere in negotio salutis tue, percurrite Ecclesias Apostolicas, apud quas ipsae adhuc Cathedrae Apostolorum suis locis praesident, apud quas ipsae authenticae literae eorum recitantur, sonantes vocem, & representantes faciem uniuscujusque. Et postea: si haec ita se habent, ut veritas nobis adjudicetur quicumque in ea regula incedimus, quam Ecclesia ab Apostolis, Apostoli à Christo, Christus à Deo tradidit, &c. Mea est possessio, olim possideo, prior possideo, habeo origines firmas ab ipsis auctoribus quorum fuit res. Ego sum Heres Apostolorum; sicut caverunt testimonio suo, sicut fidei commiserunt, sicut adjuraverunt, ita teneo. Vos certe exheredaverunt semper & abdicaverunt ut extraneos, ut inimicos: unde enim extranei & inimici Apostolis haeretici, nisi ex diversitate doctrinae, quam unusquisque de suo arbitrio, adversus Apostolos aut protulit aut recepit. Tertul. de Praescript. Haeret. Cap. 36, 37.

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ther Faith, nor Honor, nor Conscience, nor Piety; and in short that they were a company of profligate wretches, that had shaken off all fear of God, and reverence for Men; or else they would never have so shamefully prevaricated and have imposed on the world in a matter of this high consequence.

These difficulties respect the *Persons* of these *Christian Doctors*; let us farther consider the great absurdities which attend this supposition with relation to the *Doctrine* which they taught, and the *success* that it gained in the world. Immediately upon the publication of it, as far as we have any Records of these matters, it was universally received wherever the Christian Religion was planted. These *Doctrines* of the *Divinity of Christ* and the *Creation of the world* by him (which allways went hand in hand together) were admitted and believed, and that not only as *common truths* but as *fundamental Articles* of it, and the contrary Opinions were branded with the names of *pernicious and detestable errors*: now let us put these things together.

Our Adversaries say that the *Doctrines* above mentioned are contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture, as it was allways understood, by all Christians Learned or Illiterate, from the first penning of it till about the middle of the *second Age*, and then

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I Vide Schlichting: Praef: Disp: Contra Meisn. Zwickeri Irenicum Irenicorum. Authorem bilibræ veritatis, &c. M. N. in his Book stiled the judgment of the Fathers touching the Trinity, is positive that about the year 150 the Doctrine of the Church began to be corrupted, and then Justin Martyr introduced the Article of the Divinity of Christ. Some indeed of the Socinians rise higher, and tell us that this Apostacy from the Christian Faith began very early, statim post Apostolorum tempora. So M. Gittichius in an Epist. to Ruarus, agreeable to his furious temper, affirms, that non longe post fata Apostolorum, amissa penitus erat veritas Christianæ Religionis. The truth of the Christian Religion was entirely lost, Ruari Epist. Vol. 1. p. 465. And indeed it is no wonder there should be such a defection from the true Doctrine, when, if he be to be believed, there was then so great a degeneracy of manners, that all true Piety was Bannished from the Church of Christ, and nothing but Superstition was to be seen and Doctrines of Devils, which did Universally prevail. Re-

the *Fathers*, (and particularly *Justin Martyr*, whom they make the principal Author of this Innovation) introduced these new Doctrines, which they learned in the *School of Plato*, into the Church of Christ.

Well! But what was the Issue of this bold attempt? why if we consider the nature of it with relation to that Religion, in which all the Professors of it had so near an Interest, and for which upon all occasions, they then shewed so *passionate a Concern*, one would think it were very *unlikely* that it should at all, but absolutely *impossible*, that it should presently and generally succeed. But here to our great Amazement we find, that this innovation did all upon a *sudden*, and *Universally* prevail, and that without any opposition from the wisest and best men of that Age, or those succeeding, who one would think, should be concerned to preserve and defend their Religion; which if at any time it stood in need of the *Zeal and Courage* of its Professors, it now called for it in this present case. For they could not but know that by an *Innovation* in this one Article, *their Religion* must receive an *entire alteration* in all the most important branches of it: and yet it was admitted as soon as proposed, without any the least complaint or struggle to the contrary. Sure the whole *Christian world* were in a strange *drowsie disposition* at that time, Pastors and People being, by I know not what enchantment, laid in a *profound sleep*, whilst this *inimicus homo*, *this enemy came and sowed his Tares*.

But it must be more than a *bare tho deep sleep* they were in: whilst they were under the power of *this Lethargy*, the Devil sure practised some kind of *Sorcery and Witchcraft* upon their

cente adhuc Christianismo, post fata Apostolorum, omnis vera & solida pietas ex Christi Ecclesia exclusa erat; Superstitiones autem & Doctrinae Daemoniorum omnia oppresserint. Ibid. p. 433. Sure in this transport, *Gittichius* was unmindful of his old Masters the *Nazarens*, *Mineans*, *Ebionites*, *Cerinthians*, and *Alogians*, so much Celebrated by the Famous *M. N.* as the great Defenders of the Unity of the God-head, against this New, but Dangerous encroachment made upon it, by the Doctrine of the Divinity of Christ.

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understandings, by which all their faculties were changed, and their apprehensions of things so suddainly and so entirely altered, that those who went to Bed under the Conviction that Christ was a *meer Man*, rose the next morning with the Belief of his *Divinity*, and that he was the *Eternal Son of God and the Creator of the world*. He that can believe this, may be in a good disposition to admit into his Creed all the idle Tales told by the *Legendary Writers* of the Lives and Actions of the Saints, or if you please in the *Talmud* or the *Alcoran*, in which nothing can be more incredible than this *Socinian account*.

For, that *Images* devoid of Life and Sense, should *Sweat and Weep and Bleed*, as they tell us, is no small wonder. Again, that *Brute Beasts* should *speak with Mens voice*, or which is more, that *dumb Statues* like that of *Memnon*, should sometimes become *vocal*, is equally astonishing. But none of these is more strange and surprizing than that all wise and good men should be *unmoved and silent* in a Case, in which if at any time, they ought to have *lifted up their Voice like a Trumpet* and have Proclaimed the danger their Religion was in, by this bold and impious Innovation. And indeed, if they had held their peace, we might well think that *dumb Statues* and even the *Stones in the walls* would have cryed out, and have upbraided them with their ingratitude and want of zeal, for the honor of God and safety of their *Holy Faith, once delivered and ever after to be preserved pure and entire by the Saints*.

But we must goe a little higher, and say, that this account is not only *improbable*, but *extremely mischievous*; because if it be admitted, it must bring into doubt, if not totally overthrow the *authority of the Holy Scriptures*, and the *truth of the Christian Religion*.

First as to the *Scriptures*, it is certain that the *Canon of the New Testament* as it is now established, is received by all Christians chiefly upon the *Testimony of the Ancient Church*; and particularly of those early Writers of the second and third Centuries, who by our Adversaries are supposed to be contrivers and promoters of this dangerous Innovation in our Religion. In those first Ages which we are speaking of, be-

sides the *Books* which make up our *present Canon*, an incredible number of other *Gospels*, *Acts*, *Epistles*, *Revelations* were forged and sent abroad under the Venerable names of the *Apostles*, which contained Doctrines quite contrary to those which are delivered in our common *Bibles*. Again, of those *Books* which we call *Canonical*, some of them were wholly and entirely rejected by several of the Elder Hereticks. (The *Ebionites*, those famous and early Unitarians rejected the word *Logos*, and therefore with the other *Alogi* rejected likewise the Gospel of St. John, and admitted that only written by St. Mathew. They likewise refused all the *Epistles* of St. Paul, whom they accounted a Blasphemer and an Apostate from the Law of Moses.) And of those parts of the *Canon* which they did admit, none of them were preserved by them pure and entire, but, as the *Fathers* still complain they did Corrupt those Writings of the *Evangelists* and *Apostles* which they did not totally reject. And this they did by bold and arbitrary *Mutilations* and *Interpolations*, adding to, or subtracting from them, what they thought prejudicial or favorable to their private Opinions. ¹ *Clemens Alexand. Iren. Tertull. Euseb.* assure us this was their constant practice.

Now since only some few of these *Books*, pretending to a Divine Authority, can be pure and genuine, and the rest must be either corrupted or forged; it is necessary that we should endeavour to find out some way of being rightly informed which *Books* are *Genuine* and which *Spurious*, that is, to distinguish between *Imposture* and *Inspiration*; it being of no small consequence to us to know certainly, which is *Moses*, and which the *Magician*. Now the only men that can inform you must be they who lived in those *First and Early Ages*, and to them you must have recourse for your better instruction in this Affair.

¹ Clem. Alex. Strom. Lib. 7. p. 757, 758. & alibi. *Hæresis non recipit quasdam scripturas, & si quas recipit non recipit integras: adjectionibus & detractationibus ad dispositionem instituti sui intervertit.* Tertull. de præscrip. Hæret. Cap. 7. De interpolationibus & depravationibus Scripturarum à Valentino & Marcione factis vide quæ ab eodem Tertull. dicta sunt Cap. 38. ejusdem Libri. vid. Iren. Lib. 1. Cap. 1. & alibi. Et Euseb. Lib. 5. Hist. Eccles. Cap. 28.

If you enquire of the *Unitarians* of those times, the whole Herd of them will assure you, that the greatest part of the Books which make up our present Canon, are *either entirely to be rejected*, or at least cannot safely be admitted without such *Additions or Mutilations*, which they tell you, are fit to be made. On the other hand if you enquire of *Justin Martyr, Iren. Tertull. &c.* they will assure you that the Books which we commonly receive are the only Divine Writings *given by Inspiration of God*, being such as are *able to make us wise unto Salvation*. In short, they tell you, that you ought to admit as *True and Reverence as Sacred* all those Books which compose our present Canon, and the whole *Christian Church* hath depended upon their Testimony so far, as to admit them accordingly. I am speaking now only of the Writings of the *New Testament*, in which we have the consent of the *Roman* as well as other Churches; tho the former, by the addition of certain *Apocryphal Writings*, have thought fit to enlarge the *Old Testament* against the Authority both of the *Ancient Jewish*, and the Testimony of the *Primitive Christian Church*.

Here you see we have different and contrary Opinions concerning the Books of the Scriptures; now I would fain know, and would therefore refer it to the Arbitration of any impartial Man to Determine, whose opinion and judgment any Person in point of prudence or safety ought to rely upon in this affair; either theirs who have preserved the fundamental Doctrine of the Unity, both as to nature and person, of the Godhead, such as the *Ebionites, Nazarens, Cerinthians* and others whom we stile *Ancient Hereticks*, have done, if the *Soci-nians* are to be believed: Or that of *Justin Martyr, Irenæus, &c.* who, if the same Adversaries are to be credited, have made a dangerous innovation in the Christian Religion, by introducing into it a pernicious Doctrine concerning the *Divinity of Christ and the Creation of the World by him*.

Here this matter is brought to a short issue: and I think any indifferent man, without employing much time or pains in this debate, would soon conclude in behalf of the former. And his decision would be founded upon this just and warrant-
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able reason, *viz.* that since these Books were composed for the sake of the *Doctrines* contained in them, which were thereby to be preserved and conveyed down to after times; it is highly probable, that they who kept the *Doctrines* pure and uncorrupt, would likewise preserve the *Holy Writings* which contained them so too. On the other hand, it is not unlikely, that they who had so little regard for the Doctrine, and made no Conscience of *altering it*, would make as little scruple to *corrupt the Writings* in which it was preserved: and therefore, if there were any *Spurious Writings* counterfited, or other *alterations* made in those which were *Authentick*, it ought in all reason to be laid at their doors, as the Persons who were most like to be concerned in the Forgery. And if this be so, then we must fairly shake hands with the *New Testament*, as it is now received in the Christian Church, and deliver up the Cause which we have been so long contending for, concerning the *Purity and Perfection* of those Holy Writings.

But 2dly, as the *Authority of the Scriptures*, so the *truth of the Christian Religion* is by this account brought into great doubt and thereby dangerously shocked. Among other Arguments whereby we prove the truth of the Christian Religion, those are none of the least which are taken from the consideration of the *Piety, Probity, Humility, Self-denyal, Contempt of the World*, which appeared so eminently in the Lives and Actions of those Persons who were employed in the Preaching and Publishing it to the World. All which were clear Proofs of *their veracity and integrity*, and that they would not obtrude upon others the belief of any such Doctrines that they did not firmly believe themselves, and of whose *truth and certainty* they were not clearly and fully convinced.

And as these *Divine qualities* which make up the Character of the *Evangelists and Apostles* is one great argument of the truth of their Doctrine, so the *success* which attended their Preaching is no less convincing: for without the help of *secular arts or arms*, they prevailed against all the *Force and Power*, the *Craft and Policy*, the *Learning and Eloquence* of the World; their Religion spread it self far and wide, and vanquished all opposition
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made against it either by Men or Devils. Now if to the *progress* which this Doctrine made, we add the *short time* in which it was to make it, it will encrease the wonder, and be a more convincing demonstration of its Truth and Divine Original.

I need not insist longer upon a Subject so well known, and so copiously handled by all Writers who are engaged in the defence of the Christian Religion. But now if what our Adversaries have advanced upon this Head before mentioned be true, it will not only weaken but entirely overthrow the force of all this Argumentation. For here we have Men (*viz.* the Fathers of the second and third Centuries,) renowned for their *Holiness, Piety, Patience, Self-denial*; regulating their Lives by the precepts of the Gospel, and laying them down in Confirmation of the Truth of its Doctrines, and yet are found guilty of one of the most detestable practices that any the most profligate wretches could possibly be engaged in.

The Case in short, as we intimated before, is this. *Justin Martyr* and the other Fathers of that Age, published to the World that *Jesus Christ* whom they owned to be their Savior, was the *Eternal Son of God, by whom he made the World*. This Doctrine they do not whisper as a secret, or deliver *obiter*, only by the by, but constantly and publickly they proclaim it upon all occasions, in the *solemn professions* of their Faith, in the *Apologies* which they made for it, in the *Disputes* which they had with *Heathens, Jews and Hereticks*, they allways I say, declare this to be an essential part of their Religion, and a fundamental Article of it, which they affirmed to be *Revealed in the Scriptures, Preached by the Apostles, delivered down* from them by a near and unexceptionable Tradition: which Tradition was preserved in the *Records of the Churches* which were planted by the Apostles, as a *Sacred Depositum*, which they constantly appeal to, and to which every body might have recourse who desired to be farther satisfied of this matter.

Our *Unitarians* on the other hand say, that all this fine Story is a downright Romance. For this Doctrine is *not Revealed*

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in the Scriptures, never was *Preached by the Apostles*, nor consequently could be delivered down from them; it never was *believed* by the Church till *Justin Martyr's* days, by whom, together with the *other Fathers* of that Age, it was brought out of the *School of Plato*, and introduced into the Church of Christ. And to gain the greater Credit to it, they adorned it with the *Name and Authority* of the Apostles, from whom they very solemnly, but very falsely say they received it, and so they obtruded upon the world their *own Inventions* as the *Oracles of God*.

What greater *Prevarication* or indeed *Blasphemy* can men be guilty of, than thus to persuade the world of the *Divine extraction* of that *Doctrine*, which really was of *Paganish Descent and Original*; impiously ascribing what was the *invention of Philosophers* to the *inspiration of the Holy Ghost*. But the folly of this attempt must equal the *impiety* of it: for they had no *secular designs* to serve, no *sensual Passions* to gratify, no *Worldly interest* to promote by it; on the contrary, it exposed *their Religion* (which they endeavored with so much zeal to propagate) to the *Reproach and Censure* of *Jews and Heathens*, and *their Persons* to the greatest dangers; being brought before *Kings and Governors*, and by their *Edicts and Orders* were *whipped and scourged, Imprison'd, and Banished, Tortured and put to Death*, and all this they were content to endure not only with patience but with pleasure, in confirmation of a *Doctrine* which they knew to be *false*, as being *forged* by themselves but the other day in a manner.

No greater *infatuation* can possibly be imagined then what ruled in this affair; and therefore the words of *Arius Antoninus* the *Pro-Consul* of *Asia* mentioned by *Tertull. ad Scap.* might well be applyed to the Christians who offered themselves to *Martyrdom*, if they were such *stubborn, desperate Fools* as our Adversa-

I *Dicimus & palam dicimus, & vobis torquentibus lacerati & cruenti vociferamur, Deum colimus per Christum*; Tertull. Apol. adversus Gentes. Cap. 21. *Hunc, Christum scilicet à Deo prolatum asserit, & prolatione generatum, & idcirco filium Dei & Deum dictum ex unitate substantiæ.* Hunc, *Sermonem, rationem atque virtutem Dei* appellat per quem omnia molitus est, atque idcirco illum *Universitatis artificem* esse affirmat, Eod. Loc.

ries by their *Hypothesis* must make them, ὡς δειλοὶ, εἰ θέλετε ἀποθνήσκειν, κρημνὸς ἢ βρόχος ἔχετε. Unhappy men, if you are weary of your Lives, betake your selves to *Gibbets* or *Precipices*, but do not so foolishly part with them in defence of a notorious fable and falshood.

Now the conclusion that naturally follows from all this must be, that if it be possible for wise and good men, to enter into a combination thus to cheat and gull the world in a matter of such high consequence; then all arguments in order to prove the truth of any History or matter of fact, taken from the consideration of those *moral qualities* which adorn the persons of men who attest it, must be of no force; because upon this supposition, we can have no way to distinguish between *sincerity and hypocrisy, wisdom and folly, innocence and guile, fidelity and perfidiousness*: or if we could frame any *notional distinction* between them, yet in *reality and fact* it would be altogether insignificant; because they would all have a like influence upon the counsels and actions of Men, and help to produce the same effects in the world.

Perhaps it will be said that the *Fathers* before mentioned, tho they were very good men, yet might be *deceived*; for they had their *failings* and *errors* as well as those who came after them. Right! but there is no room for any such suggestion in the present Case. For tho they had their *private Opinions* and *private Reasonings* in which no doubt they might, and sometimes were mistaken; yet here, as to what they affirm of the *Divinity of our Savior and the Creation of the world by him*, they declare it to be the *common and universally received* opinion of all good Christians, whereby they were distinguished from other *sects and partys*; and therefore the whole body of the Christian Church could not be deceived in a matter so well known and so universally established: and withal in a matter of so great moment, on which the truth of their whole Religion both as to Faith and Practice depended. In short, if they could be deceived here, they could be assured of nothing. Again, they had their *failings* tis true, but it is impossible they should be guilty of so *impudent and deliberate a falshood*, as to make this

innovation in the Doctrine of the Apostles, and at the same time, against their knowledge and convictions, still to appeal to their writings and shelter it under their name and authority. This is too scandalous a prevarication to be consistent with any the *least sense of Religion*, and much less with that *eminent virtue and piety* which was so conspicuous in their Lives and Actions.

In the next place, as the Arguments taken from the *qualitys & virtuous dispositions* of the Publishers of the Gospel are, by this supposition of our Adversaries, greatly weakened, so the way of arguing from the *mighty progress* which the Christian Religion made, and the short time it was to make it, is hereby clearly overthrown. For why should we urge the *success of the Gospel*, and that it prevail'd every where without *force or fraud*, without *secular arts or arms* to support it, only by the *strength and clearness* of its own principles; when the like may be affirmed of *error*, nay of a very gross, foolish, absurd as well as dangerous error, if our Adversaries are to be believed.

For this opinion concerning the *Divinity of Christ*, which they say was contrived by *Justin Martyr* and other *Fathers* of the second *Century*, upon the first publication of it did all upon a sudden and Universally prevail, and that without any complaint or struggle made against it by the wisest and best men of that and the succeeding Ages; but on the contrary, was admitted as soon as proposed, not only as a *common truth*, but as a *fundamental Article* of their Religion by the whole Church; and the *contrary opinion* was branded with the name of a *pernicious and detestable error*, as I observed before. Now this I confess is a very strange and astonishing account, and if true, must not only equal, but taking in all the circumstances of it, surpass any, nay indeed, all the *Miracles* that were wrought in confirmation of the Christian Religion.

And thus we have seen the force of this Argument which is taken from the uniform testimony of the Ancient Church; which, I must crave leave to suggest, ought to be extended not only to matters of *Doctrine*, but to that likewise which relates to the *Government of the Church*; which they of the *Presbyteri-*

an persuasion affirm, underwent an alteration not long after the Apostles days. For whereas the *Ecclesiastical authority* was, as they say, during the *Apostolical Age* and for sometime after, fixed in the *College of Presbyters* with a Parity of Power; yet it continued not long so, but near the beginning of the *second Century* as some conceive, or towards the middle of it as others imagine, this power was transferred from the Community to one single person, who was distinguished from his fellow *Presbyters* and styled a *Bishop*, which was a plain innovation in the *Apostolical practice*, but however universally prevailed. The moral Impossibility of which change hath been sufficiently made to appear by many of the Learned asserters of *Episcopacy*.

That which I would upon this occasion, further recommend to the serious consideration of our Brethren of the Separation, is, that this *Hypothesis* of theirs is of dangerous consequence to the *Authority of the Holy Scriptures*, and the *truth of the Christian Religion*, both which depend much (not indeed *in themselves*, as to their own internal truth and certainty which arises from other Principles and Considerations; but *as to us* and our persuasion) upon the *Testimony of the Ancient Church*. But now if they could be concerned in this *alteration of the Government* left them by the Apostles, then we must say, that all the objections before mentioned against the *Scriptures* and *Religion* will recur; and that both with relation to the persons of the Fathers, and the success which attended this Innovation.

The case in short is this. The *Fathers*, as far as we have any Records of these matters, in their Writings still make mention of the Government of the Church by *Bishops*: this Government, they tell the world and proclaim it upon all occasions, was derived down to them from the *Apostles*, who instituted and nominated the *Bishops* themselves who were to preside in the Churches of their own plantation; and they could name them particularly who succeeded each other down to their own times. *Habemus enumerare eos qui ab Apostolis sunt instituti Episcopi in Ecclesiis, & successores eorum*, as we heard before from *Irenaeus, Lib. 3. Cap. 3.* where he hath given us an

exact Catalogue of the Bishops of *Rome* down to his own Times.

An account of the several *Successions* in the Churches of *Jerusalem*, *Alexandria*, *Corinth*, &c. may be seen in *Eusebius*, partly from the *Memoirs* of ancient Writers, such as *Hegesippus* and *Dionysius of Corinth*; and partly from the *Records* and other Monuments of those Churches themselves. Now I would refer it to the judgment of any indifferent person to determine, whose Testimony ought to be relied upon, either that of *Irenaeus*, *Hegesippus* and *Tertullian*, &c. in a matter of fact relating to that very Age in which they themselves lived, and about which it was impossible they should be mistaken thro ignorance; or the improbable surmizes of *Blondel* and *Salmassius*, &c. who lived near fifteen hundred years after; grounded on some *obscure passages* partly of Scripture, and partly of other Writers, and other *Arbitrary and Farfetched* consequences forced from them.

These latter tell us that the Government of the Church received a *notable alteration* in the *second Century*, but the particular *place where*, and the *exact time when* this Innovation was attempted surpasses all human discovery: The former assure us that *no alteration* was made in their times, but the Government Instituted by the Apostles was *carefully preserved* in all the Churches of the world, for which they had so great a reverence that they would not upon any Consideration have consented to an alteration of it.

Now what can we think of these Fathers, I beseech you? If this account which they give us be false, then it must be owing either to *Ignorance* or *Design*. That these ancient Writers should be *ignorant* in a matter of so publick a nature and such Universal concern, which could not escape any the most careless observation, is absolutely impossible. They must then in this account *prevaricate* against their knowledge and convictions: and if so, it must follow, as we formerly observed in the case of the pretended Innovations made by them in the Doctrines of Religion, that they were men of neither *Faith*, nor *Honor*, nor *Conscience*, in obtruding so notorious a falshood upon the world,
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and palliating their own *Contrivance* with the venerable name of an *Apostolical Institution*.

Now who would regard any thing delivered by such men? They tell us indeed that they received the *Holy Scriptures* from the Apostles, and with them the Doctrine concerning the *Divinity of Christ*, as we heard before; and do they not with equal assurance and solemnity affirm the like of the *Government of the Church*, in which, if these later discoveries made by the Patrons of Presbytery may be credited, they are known to *prevaricate*? And if so, then their *Testimony* is entirely to be rejected, and you cannot safely rely upon them in any thing that they say. For when a Preacher or Writer is once given up to so mean and base a practice as *Lying*, and can venture to publish a *deliberate falsehood* to the world, then his Reputation is quite lost, whatever his Learning or Abilities may otherwise be: and tho he may upon some occasions speak truth, yet no man in point of wisdom can rely upon him without some farther assurance of that truth, besides his own *Testimony*.

But the *impudence* of this pretended Innovation must equal the *perfidiousness* of it: for these Fathers still appeal to *Registers* and *Records*, which every body might have recourse to, and thereby might with all the ease in the world, have detected the Forgery, and at the same time sufficiently confuted all these vain pretences. But these men went on still in proclaiming these false stories, and appealing to *Records* for the justification of them, which they would never have done if they had not abandoned *all shame* as well as lost *all sense of Religion*.

But in the next place let us see what success this pretended innovation met with. Why, all upon a sudden it obtained Universally in all the Churches of the world, and that without any complaint or opposition from any person whatsoever. In the former alteration, supposed by the *Unitarians* to be made in the *Faith* of the Church about the *Divinity of Christ*, sundry persons there were, whom we know to be Enemies, but the *Socinians* account Friends to the Christian Doctrine, who withstood this pretended innovation. *Valentinus, Marcion, Artemon,*

Artemon, &c. and a long rabble of *Hereticks*, raised a great clamor, and disturbed the peace of the Church upon this occasion: tho' their opposition in this case, against the established Doctrines of Christianity, is of no more force, than the opposition made by *Diagoras, Theodorus, &c.* to the existence of a God, is against the Universal consent of mankind in that first and fundamental article of all Religion. But however, they did make an opposition against them.

But *here*, with relation to the change made in the *Ecclesiastical authority* of the Church, we hear of nothing but peace and concord and an universal consent, among men of all parties and all persuasions. *Polycarp and Marcion, Irenaeus and Valentinus, St. Cyprian and Novatian*; that is, *Catholick and Heretick*, those who *joyn with*, and those who *separate* from the Church, all conspire to make this alteration, or at least all agree to submit to it, *quietly and silently*, without *scruple* and without *noise*.

This is the most unaccountable event that ever happened since Societies were Instituted, and Government appointed for the preservation of order and peace in them. For here we have a *form of Polity* pretending to be of *Divine Original*, firmly established and universally submitted to by all the Churches in the world, (if the Patrons of *Presbytery* are to be believed) yet all upon a sudden, no body can tell *how*, or *where*, or *when*, entirely changed; and this great alteration made without *observation*, and complied with without any the least *struggle or complaint*. This looks like *Enchantment* rather than *Conviction*; that men all of a sudden should be deprived of their understanding and resolution so far, as either *not to know* what was done in an affair of a publick nature, in which every Christian had an Interest, and which could escape no man's observation that was master of common sense; or to be so *unconcerned*, that no body would *lift up his finger* to support the common cause of their liberty and privilege, or *open his mouth* in defence of it.

I shall therefore take the boldness as to make use of the words of Mr. *Chillingworth* upon this occasion, in his Apostolical Institution

Institution of Episcopacy demonstrated. *If we look upon the (supposed) Presbyterians of those Primitive times, but as meer natural men; yet knowing by experience, how hard a thing it is, even for Policy armed with Power by many attempts and contrivances, and in a long tract of time, to gain upon the liberty of any one People; undoubtedly we shall never entertain so wild an imagination, as that among all the Christian Presbyteries in the world, neither Conscience of duty, nor Love of liberty, nor Aversness from the Pride and Usurpation of others over them, should prevail so much with any one, as to oppose this universal Invasion of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, and the common liberty of Christians. If these things may be true, I doubt not but all the Fables in the Metamorphosis may be acted and prove true Stories.*

But that is not all; there is a farther mischief attends this account, and that is, if this *be true*, it will go a great way to prove our Religion to *be false*; the truth of which was wonderfully confirmed by the mighty and speedy progress that it made in the world; which was an evident argument that the *power* that Conducted was equal to the *wisdom* that contrived it, that is, they were both *Supernatural*, both *Divine*. But the force of this Argument by this account is entirely overthrown; for here is an *Innovation* supported with all the *Falshood* and *Impudence* imaginable, yet meets with the like and greater success. But this I have taken notice of before, and therefore shall insist no longer upon it.

I hope by this time the Reader is sufficiently convinced of the fallhood and folly of this suggestion made by our Adversaries, *viz.* that *Justin Martyr* and other Fathers of the second Century made this Innovation in our Religion, by introducing into it this, before unheard of, Doctrine concerning the *Divinity of Christ*, which tho it be the most improbable and absurd account in the world, yet they have the confidence still to urge us with it. But this is not so much to be wondered at, forasmuch as hereby they only tread in the steps of their Forefathers the *Ancient Hereticks*; among whom *Artemon* the *Unitarian* had the boldness to affirm that the Apostles and all who succeeded them down to the times of *Pope Victor*, declared

our

our Savior to be a *meer man*; and that the contrary Doctrine concerning his *Divinity* was introduced by Pope *Zephyrine* who succeeded him.

This was so impudent a Calumny that no man could have ventured upon it, who had not extinguished all shame and modesty. For as that Ancient Author (supposed to be *Caius*), who answered *Artemon* observes, nothing could be objected in relation to this pretended alteration of the Doctrine of the Church which could be more easily refuted. For first, the *Holy Scriptures* which were penned long before *Victor's* time, declare our Savior to be God. 2dly The *Christian Writers* who were elder, or contemporary with *Victor*, such as *Justin Martyr*, *Miliades*, *Tatian*, *Clemens Alexand.* not to mention *Irenaeus* and *Melito*, and others whose Books then were in every bodies hands, do every where affirm him to be God as well as Man. Lastly, the Ancient *Hymns and Psalms* of the Church, composed in the Earliest times of Christianity, and continued down to these times, and which were still publicly used in the Assemblies of the Faithful, these I say, Celebrate the praises of Christ and Proclaim his Divinity.

And as for Pope *Victor* himself, whom *Artemon* would claim to be of his side, he was so far from favoring this Opinion, that he Excommunicated *Theodotus* for denying our Savior to be God. How then could he give countenance to this impious Doctrine, who shewed so great a dislike of the promoter of it as to cast him out of the Church, and judge him unworthy of the Communion of the faithful? But enough of this. I must now make as much haste as I can to finish what remains to be said upon this Head, in which I shall be as brief as possible, having spent so much time in confirming the three former Arguments, brought in behalf of the literal Exposition of this Text in the *Coloss.*

The 4th Argument before mentioned for proof of it was, that it was received by *Enemies* as well as *Friends*, that is, by all *unprejudiced persons*.

1 *Apud Euseb. Lib. 5. Cap. 28.*

That

That the world was Created by the *word and wisdom* of God, was the opinion of the *Ancient Jews*, not only of those who lived before our Saviors time, who waited and longed for the coming of the same *Messiah*, in whom we believe: but likewise of many of them who lived afterwards, tho' otherwise enemies to his Person and Religion: as may be seen by the Testimonies cited out of them, in the Book before mentioned, styled the Judgment of the *Ancient Jewish Church*, &c. And the same notion obtained among the *Pagans*, as is evident from the Testimonies cited to this purpose out of *Orpheus*, (I mean the Author of those Verses which go under his Name) *Heraclitus*, *Zeno*, and others, which may be seen in *Grotius* his Comment upon 1 Jo. 3. v.

Now how the *Platonists and Stoicks* came by this notion, which, as we formerly observed, was a *Doctrine of Faith*, and therefore could not be discovered by natural reason, tho' we cannot certainly demonstrate, yet it's highly probable that they had it by Conversation with the Jews, and perusing their Writings. It being very well known that a great part of the knowledge and notions which the most Celebrated amongst the *Ancient Greek Philosophers* were masters of, was borrowed, tho' much disguised and altered by them afterwards, from that Philosophy which they accounted Barbarous.

It is true, the *Jews and Heathens* did not apply this to our blessed Savior, but however we have this advantage by it; 1st, that when they speak of a *Creation* performed by the *λόγος*, they allways intended a *true, proper* formation of the material world. 2^{dly}, That this *sermo*, or *ratio* who was the Instrument, as they thought, by whom God made the world, was not accounted by them an *accident or property*, but a true, living, *subsisting person*. This will be a great confirmation of the truth of our assertion, viz. That where the *Creation of the World* is ascribed in Scriptures to the *Son of God*, (who was that true *λόγος* whom the *Heathens* ignorantly magnified) it is to be understood not of a *Metaphorical*, but a *proper* Creation of the material world, that is, *the Heavens and the Earth*. And so the words of St.

John were understood by *Amelius* the Platonist, and *Julian* the Apostate, as we observed before.

Lastly, if to all this we add, that the *Figurative Exposition*, given us by *Socinus*, of this and other parallel places of Scripture, is *harsh, arbitrary and unnatural*, it will be a farther confirmation of the truth of ours. It would take up too much time to give a full account, and much more a large Confutation of what *Socinus* and his Disciples have said in order to pervert the true and proper meaning of these words. Let it suffice to say in general that they interpret the *Creation* mentioned in the Text by *Reformation*, so that when *all things are said to be Created by Christ*, it is as much as if the Apostle had said all things were *Reformed* by him. And if you further enquire what they mean by this *Reformation*, they tell you, that it signifies the bringing things into a *new State, Condition and Order different from what they had before*.

For instance, when the *Angels* ² and the several ranks of them, described here by *Thrones, Dominions, &c.* are said to be *Created* by Christ, the meaning of it is, *that whereas before they were Subject only to God the Father, and in all the Messages*

1 *Dico ex ipso satis aperte intelligi posse in hac enunciatione, quod omnia per Christum sunt creata, nec vocem omnia universe prorsus accipiendam esse, nec verbum creandi primam sed secundam quandam Creationem, id est, Reformationem significare.* Socin. Christ. Rel. Instit. p. 660. *Ait ergo (scil. Paulus) per Christum creata esse omnia, id est in novum reducta statum, seu renovata ac ordinata.* Schlicht. Comment. in hunc Loc. *Rectius est eundem interpretari ordinata sunt, novum quendam statum sunt consecuta.* Grot.

2 *Mens Apostoli fuit ostendere Christum omnibus & celestibus & terrestribus praeesse ac dominari, atque hac praecipue ratione omnes per ipsum renovatos ac reformatos fuisse.* Socin. contra Erasmi Joh. p. 521. *Eatenus potissimum sunt ista creata, id est, reformata per Christum, quatenus illis ipse dominari incepit atque regere & Gubernare.* Nam praeterquam quod hoc per se novam formam in Hierarchiam istam inducit, quae antea talem dominum ac rectorem non habebat; est etiam causa eorum omnium, quae in illa continentur, potestatem & munera mutandi, augendi, minuendi, prout ipsi visum fuerit. *ibid.* p. 524.

they were employed in, they only represented him as his Servants and Legates; now they are reduced into a new State; for since Christs Exaltation into Heaven, and the Dominion that he is there possessed of, they are now placed under his Government, who is the Head of all Principalities and Powers, and are subject to his Commands and to be ruled by his Pleasure. Now this Interpretation is extremely Arbitrary, without any warrant either from this or any other places of Scripture, and withal very harsh and absurd.

First I say it is Arbitrary, and that in two respects. First in that they restrain and limit an *Universal Proposition* to some particular Subjects, contrary both to the exprefs words and plain design of the Apostle. For whereas the Apostle affirms that *all things* were created by him, which he repeats once and again: they restrain those expressions to some particular things, viz. Creatures endued with reason and understanding, such as are Angels and Men; so that when it is said that *all things are Created by him*, no more is intended than that *all Angels and Men* were made by him. But is not this flatly to contradict the words of St. Paul? than which nothing can be uttered either more plainly or more fully. He saith *all things*, and that we might not mistake him, and restrain that to a few, which he design'd should truly Comprehend *all*, he distributes those things into such general parts, which must take every thing in the whole world into their compass without exception of any. For every thing that is, must belong either to *Heaven or Earth*, and the things that are there, must be comprehended under that other division of beings *visible or invisible*.

Neither is it sufficient for to say, that this Proposition is indeed *Universal*, but that however it is to be understood only with relation to the matter in hand, and to the subject treated of, so that it must comprehend *only* those things that are *there spoken of*. Be it so! but how can they make it out, that the *all things* here mentioned, are only things or beings endued with reason and understanding, such as are Angels and Men? This is so far from being so, that the contrary is evident from the *scope* as well as the *words* of the Apostle. For the Apostle in the words before having styled our Savior, ΠΡΩΤΟΤΟΚΟΣ ΠΑΤΕΡΟΣ

κτίσις, born before every Creature, and as such *Dominus & Heres*, Heir and Sovereign Lord of the whole Creation; every thing without exception of any, being *posterior* to him and *subject* to his Government: He comes to prove what he affirmed; which he doth by this irrefragable Argument, ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα: he must be *before* all *Creatures*, because they all were *Created* by him; so that the πάντα in the 16. ver. of this Chap. which are said to be *Created* by him must be of the same extent with the πᾶσις κτίσις in the 15th. and that πᾶσις κτίσις must not be restrained to the *new*, but comprehend the *old Creation* with all the parts of it, is evident from the *scope* of the place, and the Apostles design in this Discourse, which otherwise will be very *mean* and *unbecoming* so great, though he were no Inspired Writer, as we shall shew by and by.

2dly, This Exposition is *Arbitrary*, in that it gives us a new and before unheard of interpretation of the word ἐκτίσθη, which we render'd *Created*, but they say should rather be interpreted, *ordered* or *reformed*; *all things*, that is all Angels and Men, *acquired a different State and Condition under Christ since his Exaltation into Heaven, from what they had before.* Now this is a bold and unwarrantable practise to give us a new exposition of a word, different from what it hath in all other places of the New Testament. The word *Creation* being never used either by our Apostle, nor any other of the ' Inspired Writers (of the New Testament) to denote any other, but either the *Old* which is the *Natural*, or the *New* which is the *Moral Creation*, and purely and solely respects Men who are the only Subjects that are capable of it.

Now this is a high piece of arrogance in any Men to assume any such authority to themselves as to alter the *settled and standing* signification of words, the very *use* of which will hereby be defeated: and with Relation to the *Scriptures*, it will not be a very bold, but likewise a very pernicious practise.

1 Except it be in the 1 Epist. of Pet. 2. ch. v. 13. But there it gives no countenance to our adversaries interpretation.

For if it be in any mans power to interpret the words contained there, against not only the *usual*, but the *constant* and *Universal* meaning of them in all other places; then it is in the power of men to render them useless and insignificant, because at this rate they can have no *certain* and *determinate* signification, but which may be altered at pleasure; and then nothing can be safe if this practise be allowed.

Our Adversaries are so much aware of this, that they are content the words should be construed so as to comprehend the *Moral or new Creation* before spoken of. But this is clogged with such difficulties as cannot easily be got over.

For 1st, hereby the *Angels* both *good and bad* are excluded out of the number of those things which are said to be Created by Christ, contrary to the express words of the Apostle. For the *good Angels* do not want this renovation, and the *evil* are not capable of it. Now to say that the word *Created*, when applyed to the *Angelical Hierarchy* denotes only an *external and political Reformation*, viz. of their State and Condition, as was said before; and that when applyed to men it signifies their *internal renovation and reconciliation* to God; is a bold and arbitrary affirmation, without any the least warrant from the Text; and to be sure would never be ventured upon by any, but such who assume to themselves an absolute and uncontrolled power over the expressions of the Scripture, to Construe them as they please, as our Adversaries upon all occasions venture to do.

But 2^{dly}, as *all the Angels* are by this Exposition excluded from this Creation, against the words of the Text, so *all Men*, not only the *good*, but the *bad* likewise are made the subjects of it, contrary to Sense and Experience. For tho' good Men are Reconciled to God by the Merits of Christ, and renewed

1 *Secunda creatio duas partes habet, una est reformatio rerum intelligentia præditarum, quatenus potissimum illis Christus dominari incepit, easque regere & gubernare. Altera est eorundem renovatio, quatenus sunt per eundem Christum inter se, & erga Deum reconciliatæ & concordæ factæ, Socin. contra Erasm. Johann. p. 521.*

in their mind, by the power of his Grace; and thereby are become *new Creatures*: yet the wicked and impenitent are far from being so, forasmuch as they continue in their former corrupt State, having not *put off the Old Man nor the Affections and Lusts thereof*.

But against this our Adversaries have an Answer in reserve, *viz.* that assertions of this nature how positive and *Categorical* soever they may seem to be, yet are to be understood with a just reservation. And particularly in this case, when it is said *all Things*, that is, *all Men are Created*, that is, *Reformed and Renewed* by Christ, *we are not so much to regard the event, as the counsel and purpose of God*; who by sending his Son into the world really intended and designed this Renovation of Men, and thereby reconciling them to himself. It is true, Men by their own malice and obstinacy oftentimes defeat the gracious designs of Heaven, but that is not much to be regarded *saith Schlichting*². For where the Causes are every way sufficient to produce the effect (as the Preaching, Example, Miracles and Death of Christ are in the case before us) the force and efficacy of those Causes is warrant enough of it self to ascribe the effect to them, tho' otherwise it never be accomplished: which is a very absurd and in many cases a very dangerous state of this matter. For at this rate numberless fallhoods may be positively and roundly affirmed, without any impeachment of a Mans veracity.

It is true, the *virtue and efficacy* of the Cause will be ground sufficient to *denominate the Cause* it self. As thus, Because our Saviour did all that was requir'd, and all that was necessary to be done on *his part*, to expiate the Sins of Mankind, and thereby reconcile them to his Father, therefore he ought justly to be styled the *Redeemer and Saviour* of all Mankind. But now if on the other hand a Man should affirm, that all Men of all Ages, Ranks and Conditions, to whom the Gospel hath

¹ *Paulus cum de reconciliatione ista & pacificatione agit, non tam eventum quam Dei consilium spectare videtur. Id. Ibid. p. 522.*

² *Nec refert quod hominum plurimi ob malitiam & contumaciam Deo non sunt reconciliati. Hoc enim non attenditur. Ubi causæ sunt efficacissimæ ad producendum effectum, sola vis causarum spectatur ut asseratur effectus. Schlichting. Comment.* been

been Preached, are, or have been *actually Reconciled* to God, and *Saved* by Christ, and should deliver this roundly without any exception, would not the world justly esteem such a one a bold desperate Impostor? who by Preaching such Doctrine, would encourage and embolden Men in all the wickedness in the world, which by this Position might be Reconciled with the hopes of happiness.

In this case therefore, I would fain know whether it would be a sufficient excuse for such a Man to say, that if we consider either the *design* of God, or the nature of those means made use of by our Savior, as they were sincerely intended on Gods part, so they were in themselves every way sufficient for the *Reconciliation and Salvation* of Mankind; but the malice and obstinacy of most have defeated those methods, which as to them become useless and have no effect. If this be all that he meant, why did he not express this matter more plainly, and qualify it with such limitations, as Men might not have misconstrued his meaning and be lead into any dangerous mistake thereby.

In short, for any man to affirm, that all Men good and bad, Believers and Unbelievers, those who Repent, and those who continue in their Impenitence, are all *Reformed, Regenerated, become new Creatures, Reconciled to God, Created in Christ Jesus to Righteousness and true Holyness*; (all which expressions are of the same import and signification,) is to proclaim a notorious falshood, contrary to the whole tenor of the Gospel, and the design of Christs coming into the world. And yet all this you may venture safely and roundly to affirm, according to our Adversaries Expositions, without any *limitation* of the words, provided you only *limit them in your thoughts*, with this restriction, *viz.* that what Christ did was every way sufficient to accomplish all this, and would certainly effect it, provided Men would perform the necessary conditions required on their parts to render what he did effectual.

But is this a warrantable practise, to utter a *direct falshood*, and then think to reconcile it to truth by a *mental reservation*? Are not words to be construed in the sense in which they are generally

generally understood, and to do otherwise, is it not a detestable piece of prevarication? because hereby the foundations are layd for all manner of fallshood and deceit, against which it will be impossible for men with all their care and caution to guard themselves.

To proceed, The absurdity of our Adversaries interpretation will further appear from hence, *viz.* that if the Apostle, when he said *all things were Created by Christ*, meant not the *Old* but the *New* Creation, as we have now explained it; then he must be brought in delivering a very *mean, common truth*, with very great *pomp and solemnity*, which is such a piece of trifling as is inconsistent with the gravity of an ordinary, and much more the dignity of an Inspired Writer.

Let us consider the words in themselves. The Apostle saith that Jesus Christ was *the first born of every Creature*: that is, say the *Socinians*, he had a being and did exist before every *New Creature*, who were made such, *viz.* renewed in their natures and reconciled to God by the Gospel, which he first Preach'd, and his Apostles afterwards published to the world. Is this a matter of that Consequence as deserves to be thus solemnly declared in the 15 *ver.* and repeated again in the 17 *ver.* as an important truth, which makes likewise a great part of that *noble Character* by which he is here described? which yet is so obvious a truth that no man in his right wits can deny it. For was it possible that Christ should Preach his Gospel and convert the world by it before he was born?

Indeed if he had said, that Mankind who before were become extremely degenerate in their manners, were wonderfully reformed by the Doctrine and Example of our Savior; this had been a great commendation; because it was a clear proof of the Divinity of that Doctrine, and extraordinary Holyness of his Life. But to say that *he Lived before he Preached that Gospel*, by which the world was reformed, was that which no man not bereav'd of common sense could doubt of; and therefore there was no reason that the Apostle should be at all this pains to *inform*, and much less that he should use any
arguments

arguments to convince men of the truth of it, which yet he doth in the 16. verse, but in such a manner, that we cannot easily tell whether the assertion or proof, (according to the Exposition of our Adversaries) be more impertinent.

Christ is *before every new Creature*, in faith the Apostle, v. 16. *because they were all created by him*. This is to prove the same thing by it self: it is as much as if he said, it is very certain, and you must take notice of it as of a great truth, that Christ did *exist before every new creature*, that is, before all those men who were reformed by his Gospel; and that for this infallible reason, *because they were all reformed and reconciled to God by him*, that is, by his doctrine and example, which was the great cause of their reformation. What can be more jejune and insipid than this way of argumentation? which is an unpardonable way of trifling in a serious matter, and tends to expose the holy writings to the laughter and contempt of its adversaries. And this will farther be made evident, if as we have considered these words *in themselves*, we shall farther consider them with relation to the *intention of St. Paul*, and the words that go before.

The design of the Apostle is to magnify the redemption wrought for us, from the *dignity of the person* by whom it was accomplish'd, who is described here by three characters, as we observed before. 1st. He is styled *ὁς ἀγαπᾷς υἱόν*, v. 13. *The dear Son of God*: not a common Son at large, but *the Son of his Love*. 2^{dly}. He is said to be *εἰκὼν τῆς θεοῦ ἀφαντοῦ*, v. 15. *the image of the invisible God*; which is a clear proof that he was the natural and not an adopted Son of God; forasmuch as in him were displayed all the essential perfections of God the Father, as being of the *same nature and substance* with him. And therefore he might well tell his Apostle, Philip, Joh. 14. v. 9. *he that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father also*.

3^{dly}. As a farther evidence that he was the *natural*, and consequently the *Eternal Son of God*, he is said to be *ἄριστος τῶν υἱῶν*, *the first born*, that is *πρῶτος γενεῶν*, *born before every Creature*, and thereby *Dominus* and *Herēs*, Lord and Heir of the whole Creation; for which the Apostle assigns

this irrefragable reason, v. 16. ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα, &c. *because by him all these things were created, whether things in Heaven or things on Earth &c.* Now this was a momentous truth, fit to be made known to men, and could only be known by *revelation*: This was a great addition to the nobleness of his character, viz. *that he was the Creator of the world*, and greater could not be affirmed of him.

Now here we see all things run smooth and easy, there being a just connexion and harmony between the parts of this description. But on the other hand to affirm with our adversaries, that *this beloved Son of God, this image of the invisible God, this first born of every Creature*, had a being before any of those *new Creatures*, which were made so by *his preaching*; is mean and flat in it self, but when compared with these lofty expressions before made use of by the *Apostle*, it is so sudden and so great a fall from that *height and sublimity* to which he had advanc'd our Saviour; that it must needs be a great surprize to the Reader, accompanied with indignation likewise to find himself thus disappointed. For whereas he might expect that the writer should rather *rise* in his character, now on the other hand, to find him from so great a height to stoop so low; it must at the same time sink the reputation of the authour in his thoughts, and weaken the esteem likewise which otherwise he would have for the person commended by him. In short, no ordinary writer, in the least acquainted with the most common rules of *Logick or Rhetorick*, could be guilty of such an indecency, and therefore to be sure our *Apostle* would not.

By all that hath been said, I hope by this time it is made sufficiently to appear, that the *literal* Interpretation of this Text is to be preferred before the *figurative* one of *Socius* and his followers: and if so, then we have an irrefragable proof for the *Divinity* of our Saviour, such as the greatest adversaries of it cannot but acknowledge will amount to a Demonstration. For, *none but God could create the world.*

This was the *second* Argument which the Scriptures afford us, to prove our Saviour to be *God*, taken from the *Divine works* which he performs, and among them as the principal, that of the *Creation of the world.*

I might add a *third proof* which the Scriptures furnish us with, taken from the *Divine worship* ascribed to him, which is as clear a proof as any of the former; if the Scriptures themselves are to be believed, or the judgment and dictate of right reason, without Scripture, may be relied upon; which hath determined that the *supreme God* is the *only* object of true, religious adoration. For, if the object of divine worship may be changed, and a *creature* may, upon any pretence whatsoever, be allowed to have any share of it; then it must follow from hence, that to worship *God alone* will be a duty not of *natural religion*, but of *positive institution*, which God may require, or dispense with the obligation to it as he thinks fit. For the same reason *Idolatry*, which, by *Jews* and *Christians* hath been adjudged to consist in paying Divine honours to a Creature, will have no natural turpitude in it, as depending not on the *nature* of things, but the *pleasure of God*: but this is so contrary to the numerous and express declarations of Scripture; and will be attended with so many pernicious consequences, that I cannot conceive how any man who hath a just regard for the honour of God, or the reputation of the Christian Religion, can possibly believe it. But having had occasion to mention these things in some former papers, which are like to come in my way again, in some of these that follow, I shall say no more of them at present.

Thus we see how the Scriptures, if we can rely upon their authority, will assure us that our Saviour is *God*. They *affirm* him to be so; they furnish us with variety of arguments, in pursuance of that affirmation, to *prove* him to be so. And it is not possible for any who believed him to *be God*, to use any expressions more plain and evident, or to produce any arguments more cogent and convincing than those which the Scriptures furnish us with; so that if we judge them worthy of any credit, we must believe him to be so likewise.

But, say our adversaries, it is not *possible* for him to be God, and therefore it being repugnant to *reason*, which is to judge of the truth of *revelation*, tho' the Scriptures affirm it never so often, or ever so expressly, yet we will not believe him to

be so. No! then these Scriptures, say I, are very pernicious writings, calculated on purpose to lead men into errors; and therefore it is highly fitting, that they should be laid aside and rejected by all who have any regard to their own safety. No, say our adversaries, the Scriptures for all this are to be believed, but not in the *literal sense*, and as the words sound, but in a *mystical and figurative* meaning.

But what should induce the compilers of these writings, to make choice of such expressions as tend directly to lead their Readers into those mistakes, which cannot be distorted from their plain meaning, but by *remote and unusual tropes*, some of which are of that sort, that no man alive, before *Socinus* his time, could ever dream of them. And therefore there was not one in a *million* since the publishing of the Scriptures, if we reckon from the *Apostle's* days down to ours, who understood the words in any other but the *literal sense*; so that it is not only *ten*, but *ten hundred thousand* to one, as the Scriptures are framed, that men would be deceived by them, which is the greatest and most scandalous reflection which possibly can be cast upon those holy books.

But the shame and blame of all this must not rest here, but be transferred upon the *penmen and writers* themselves; the *Evangelists* and *Apostles* must be found *false witnesses of Christ*, who affirmed that of our Saviour, and endeavour'd by all the ways that could be to form in the minds of their readers a belief of it, *viz.* that he was God, which yet, if *Socinus* be to be credited, they did not believe themselves. What can follow from hence, but that they were downright cheats and impostors? and what *Julian* affirmed of *St. John*, will upon this supposition be verified of them all; they were *πανουργοί, ἢ ἀπατηλοί*: they were all, both *master and scholars*, engag'd in a wicked design to deceive mankind in a matter of the highest importance, in which the honour of God, and their own salvation was so nearly concerned. And if any are not lead into these dangerous errors, as the *Socinians* and other *Hereticks* may think they are not, no thanks to the *Apostles* who did all that lay in their power to seduce them.

But

But I pray you how came these men to be preserved from the common seduction? was it their singular learning, wisdom, caution joyn'd with a more than ordinary piety that secured them? no sure, men equal to them in care, and caution, and learning, and infinitely superiour to them in humility, meekness, charity, and integrity, could not guard themselves from being seduced and entangled in these erroneous opinions. Where then lay the difference between them? why truly here; that the one treated the holy writings with that reverence which became men who believed their *divine authority and inspiration*: the others shewed no regard either to the *Penmen* or *Him* that inspired them: but paid the greatest deference to their own *notions*; to which every thing must truckle; these they call *reason* which *exalts* it self against every thing that is accounted *sacred and divine*. The former came with *meek, humble, teachable tempers* to peruse the Scriptures: the others brought along with them *pride, obstinacy, perverseness*, which are apt to blind the minds of others, yet open'd, it seems, the eyes of these men. These were that *Collyrium* which made them so quick-sighted, that they could find out that, which none, or but very few of the like tempers with themselves, could ever before discern.

So much may serve to shew the impiety of this *Socinian* method, of putting *reason* in opposition to *revelation*, with relation to our *Blessed Saviour* and his *Apostles*, together with the other *Inspired Writers*, whose Honour and Reputation is hereby dangerously invaded; which was *the second evil consequence that attended it*.

I come now to consider the Third mischief that flows from it, with relation to the truth and certainty of the Christian Religion, which, if this method should prevail, would in time be thereby entirely subverted; and that with relation both to doctrines and practice.

First let us consider it with relation to the *doctrines* proposed to our belief. What Article of Faith can be safe against this method? what doctrine so important, but by a perverse

and figurative explication may be undermined. I might run through the whole *Creed*, or if you please, through the whole *Bible*, and shew, that there is scarce any thing, whether *Historical* or *Dogmatical*, that is there is proposed to our belief, but by one or other of those *Rules*, laid down by the *Socinians* for the interpretation of Scripture, may be overturned. I mention'd them before, and with the Reader's leave I shall here put him in mind of them again.

The first is, that a *possible sense* may be admitted without any regard to the *likelihood* of it; nay, in *opposition* to one that is very *probable*. 2dly, That in order to determine our assent, it is not sufficient that things are plainly *affirmed* in Scripture, but we may in some cases, farther require *strict proof and demonstration*. Lastly, let the thing proposed to us, be never so positively and plainly deliver'd, and never so well proved; yet if it be not agreeable to our *Ideas*, we may refuse to give our assent: nay, we may *wrest* the words to another meaning than that which is contain'd in, and necessarily results from them: and if they will not easily submit, we may call into our assistance *remote figures* and *unusual tropes*; some of which are of that force that nothing can stand before them. You may think your religion built upon a *rock*; but be not too confident; these will as soon and effectually blow it up as you would a house with Gunpowder.

Let us descend to the particular *Articles of our Faith*; and first to the *Creation* of the world, viz. the *Heavens and the Earth*; ascribed to *God the Father* in the beginning of the *Creed*. How easily, by the foregoing rules, may this be overturn'd? The Scripture tells us, 1. *Gen. v. 1.* that in the *Beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth*. This is *barely said*; but a bare saying, especially in a matter encumbered with so many difficulties, is not sufficient to determine a wise man's assent. You may farther require *strict proof* of what is thus roundly affirmed. *Optime dicis, Domine Moyses, sed quomodo probas?* was the saying of him of old; and, according to this rule, he had a just reason to warrant him in that demand. For, this was a doctrine that was looked upon to be incredible

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by almost all the *Pagan Philosophers*, as being contrary to the maxims of natural reason, one of the principal of which, and universally taken for granted among them, was, that *nothing could be made out of nothing*. Since therefore they have so great an appearance of reason to support them in this persuasion, it is but fit they should persist in it, till you offer them better, or at least *equal proofs* for the contrary.

This consideration hath so far influenc'd the *Socinians*, that they absolutely deny the strict, *proper creation* of the world out of *nothing*, as a thing that is utterly impossible, and as such, exceeding Omnipotence it self. And therefore they have reviv'd, as we have before observ'd, that opinion advanc'd by *Pagans* and some *ancient Hereticks*; such as *Hermogenes*, *Marcion* &c. viz. that the matter, out of which this world was made, was *coeval* with God, and consequently *independent* upon him. All therefore that they think fit to ascribe to God is, that he out of this *self originated, eternal matter* extracted this beautiful *Fabrick*, which we call the World. So that according to them, God was only *αριθμῶν εὐρετής*, an *inventer of figures*, but not *αὐτῆς τῆ φύσεως δημιουργός*, the *maker of nature it self*, as *St. Basil* expresses it.

But if you think this too much to be allowed to God; you may roundly deny him to be the *maker of the world*, either as to the *matter* with *Aristotle*; or as to the *form* in which it now appears, with the *Cartesians*; and yet this denial (if our adversaries rules of interpreting Scripture be allowed) may be consistent with your professing him to be the *Creator of Heaven and Earth*. For do but grant that it was God who put matter into motion, and then according to the settled laws of motion, without any assistance or any the least direction of an external Agent, the parts of it will naturally fall into this order, both as to the *Figure of the whole*, as also of the *shape, order, situation, motions* of the particular parts. From

Ἡ κοινὴ δόξα τῶν φυσικῶν ἔστιν γίνεσθαι ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος. τὸ γινόμενον ἐκ τῶν μὴ ὄντων γίνεσθαι ἀδύνατον; περὶ γὰρ ταύτης ὁμογνωμονοῦσι πάντες οἱ περὶ φύσεως. *Aristot. Phys. lib. 1.4. & Metaphys. 1. cap. 1, 3.*

hence will proceed *Sun* and *Moon* and *Earth*, *Stars* and *Vortexes*, in which those great luminaries will still roll on with a steady and constant motion, neither directed by the *wisdom*, nor supported by the *power* of any external Agent.

But perhaps it will be said, will not this account quite exclude *God* from having any thing to do in the Creation, contrary to the express words of Scripture, and thereby overthrow the *first Article* of our Creed? No, may some say, we will still preserve the words of Scripture, and profess our Faith in the language of the Creed: For tho' this account doth clearly exclude the *wisdom* of *God* in the *making*, and his *power* in the *Conservation* of things in that state in which they were first made, in plain and open contradiction to the words of *St. Paul*, *Rom. i. v. 20*. Yet still, it may be consistent with the belief that *God* is the *Creator of the world*; not indeed in a *strict* and *proper*, but in a *remote, improper* sense.

'Tis true, *God* had as little a hand in the making of the world as can be imagin'd, (provided we allow that he was any ways concern'd in it) for he only put this huge heap of matter into motion; but yet from this motion, according to the fixed and unalterable laws of it, the parts of matter unavoidably fell into this shape and order in which we now see them. So that in short, *God* was the *Cause* of motion, and motion the *Cause* of this beautiful Fabrick, and therefore according to that known maxim, that *causa causæ est causa causati*, *God* might be said to be the *Cause* or *maker* of it.

But *adly*, if this way of interpretation which allows too much to the words and letter of the Scripture, be not thought every way sufficient, you have another way of undermining this Article, *viz.* by having recourse to a *figurative* interpretation, which is the effectual and never-failing support of Infidelity. *In the Beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth*. There is not one of these words but is capable of a double construction, by the help of which you may easily overturn this *Primary Article*, so as to rob *God the Father* of the Honour of being the *Creator of the world*, as the *Socinians*, by the same methods, have despoil'd our *Saviour* of that glorious

rious character. The words of the New Testament are as plain and positive with relation to our Saviour, as they are in the old when apply'd to the Father.

Doth Moses say, *in the beginning God created the Heavens &c?* so doth St. John, *in the beginning was the word, and this word was God; by whom all things were made; the world was made by him.* St. Paul to the same purpose 1 Col. 16. *By him all things were created, that are in Heaven and that are in Earth, visible and invisible, &c.* But by the help of figures the Socinians have so far perverted the meaning of these words, as to make them signify quite another thing than the proper Formation of the material world. And why may not the expressions of Moses be perverted by the same method? Let us consider them distinctly.

In the beginning, that is, may some say, of the Jewish Polity, and not of that point of time, if I may so express it, in which the Heavens and the Earth began to exist, and to have a Being by the Almighty power of God, which had none before. Why may not this be said as well, as that *the Beginning*, mentioned by St. John, signifies the Beginning of the Gospel State and Dispensation, as the Socinians expound it? 2dly, By *Heaven and Earth* in Gen. 1. why may we not understand the the Jewish State, and the superiour and inferiour ranks and orders of men, of which it was composed, viz. Magistrates, such as Moses and Aaron and the Seventy Elders, comprehended under the appellation of *Heaven*, and the common people call'd by the name of *Earth*? We know in the Prophetic Schemes, the several orders of men in a State, are sometimes thus represented.

Lastly, Whereas the action ascribed to God is styled *creating or making*; this doth not necessarily signify the Giving things a new Being which they had not before; but it may denote only a new Modelling or Reforming of their former State and Condition. Thus it is interpreted by the Socinians, 1. Col. 16. *All things in Heaven and Earth were created by Christ: that is, say they, Omnia quæ sunt in Cælis ac Terra ordinata sunt, ac in novum statum ac conditionem translata.* And so may we say

of the words in *Genesis*: the Condition and State of the *Jews* was new *model'd* and *reformed* by God: For, whereas before they lived in a mean, servile condition in *Egypt*, subject to the power and oppress'd by the arbitrary commands of *Pharaoh* and his merciless *Taskmasters*; now since their deliverance from thence, God hath taken them into his own care and protection; being himself their immediate *Lord* and *Legislator*, and they became his Subjects, so as to own no other *King* or *Supreme Governour* but himself.

Lastly, Not to trouble your selves with too many niceties about particular words and phrases, you have a compendious way found out to get rid of this perplexed matter all at once; *viz.* by affirming that this whole account is but a *Fable*, or if that word sounds too harshly, a *Parable*. There is no need that you should believe that the *Heavens and the Earth* were made in that *time* and *order* as is mentioned in *Genesis*, or that mankind were propagated from two such persons as *Adam and Eve*. This is a world of *Moses's*, not of God *Almighty's* making. The whole is an *Allegory* under which is contain'd a *good moral*, and that is all that is to be regarded. To think that God employ'd but *six days* in making this beautiful System, which requir'd at *least six years* to put it into this state in which we now see it; and then that after he had finish'd it, he made a *man* to be the inhabitant and *Lord* as it were of the Lower World, whom he placed in *Paradise* among the delights of that pleasant place; but that he by tasting of a certain forbidden fruit render'd himself, and his posterity *mortal and miserable*; this exceeds all belief.

In short, to imagine that *Adam and Eve* at first were *naked*, and then by tasting of an Apple (at the instigation of a *serpent*, with whom the latter of them entertain'd a foolish and ridiculous conference) being sensible and ashamed of of their condition, they *sewed figleaves* to cover their nakedness; this is an *idle tale*, fit to be believed by *old women and children*, but not by wise men who know better things. The words therefore are but the *obscure representation* of some important

important truths which are couched under them, which are the only things that call for, and deserve our consideration.

Now if this *History* (so it hath always been accounted by the generality of *Jews* and *Christians*) of the Creation may be thus wrested into a *parable*, why may not any other *Historical* parts of the Bible be *Allegoriz'd*, and thereby perverted from their natural and literal meaning: particularly the *prophecies* concerning our Saviour, which give an account of *matters of fact*, not already performed, but to be performed in time; may all of them by these ways be perverted, as some of them have been by *Jews*, and some *Christian writers*. By which means all the proofs taken from the *Old Testament*, which yet were the *Principal*, and chiefly insisted on by our Saviour and his *Apostles*, to convince the *Jews* that he was the true *Messiah*; will be quite lost, or at least render'd in a manner insignificant.

By the same methods, all that the *Evangelists* relate as *actually done* by and accomplish'd in our Saviour, according to the *predictions* of the prophets, will be liable to be overturn'd. His conception, birth, sufferings; His crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, which make up the other *Articles* of our *Creed*, shall be all *allegoriz'd* into a *spiritual* birth, death, burial, resurrection. This is no remote or groundless supposition. This is not only what *may*, but what *actually hath* been done by *Quakers* and other *Enthusiasts*, who talk of nothing but Christ being born *within us*, of dying and rising *within*

1 Vidimus homines quosdam sine spiritu spirituales; ne literæ sc. occidenti, nimis addicti videantur, affirmantes totam historiam Jesu Christi, passionis ejus, crucifixionis, resurrectionis, ascensionis, & glorificationis, non vere & juxta literam Historiæ à Jesu Christo visibiliter in carne representatam; sed tantum illa adumbrari quod quotidie in Christi membris exhibeatur & peragatur. Nempe regnari ac renasci nos debere ex aqua & spiritu, atque ita verbum in nobis carnem fieri: crucifigendum veterem hominem, & desideria ejus mortuandum, illaque sepelienda, ut facti nova creatura resurgamus in novitate vitæ. Adeo ut illa Historia vitæ Christi, non tam de persona Christi, quam de nobis & nostra regeneratione exponenda sit, vid. Heidan. de Origine Erroris lib. 2. cap. 4. p. 101.

us, who expect no benefit from the *Christ without*, but chiefly attend to his *inward and spiritual* appearance in the conscience, in which they make the great mystery of Godliness to consist.

But perhaps you will say, this is a very bold and dangerous attempt; as being, in the consequence, destructive of the *Christian Religion*; which consists chiefly in the sincere *profession and belief* of those *Articles of Faith* which concern the *person of Christ*, and those things which are said to be *done and suffered* by him, in order to accomplish the *Salvation of mankind*. For since what is affirmed of the *First and Second Adam*, as to the *truth and reality* of things ascribed to, and reported concerning them in Scripture; stands upon the *same ground*, and is placed upon the *same level* of truth and certainty, if you *supplant* one, you must at the same time *overturn* the other: so that if it be *fabula de Adamo*, it is *fabula de Christo*; for these must both stand or fall together.

All this is true; but be that as mischievous as it will, yet it will be warranted both by the *Rules* laid down by our *Adversaries* for the expounding the Scripture, and their *known practice* in pursuance of them. Neither ought any man to be deterred from this attempt, out of any regard that he may think due either to *Reason* or *Religion*, as if it were *disagreeable* to the one, or *prejudicial* to the other.

1st. For *Reason*, this practice is so far from being *disagreeable* to that, that indeed reason, as our adversaries tell us, will *prescribe* it. For if any doctrine be proposed to your belief which seems *contrary* to your notions, these being the *standard* by which you are to judge of the truth or falshood of things: you are not obliged to govern your conceptions by that doctrine; but you are bound either absolutely to *reject* that doctrine, or if that cannot easily be done, you must find out some way of *reconciling* it to your notions: which may easily be done by the help of *Tropes and Figures*, whereby the plainest expressions may be distorted from their *proper* meaning; there being no words in a manner but what may be capable of two significations, *literal* and *figurative*; and you are at your liberty to chose which you will: you are not bound to adhere to what

is most likely, but you may insist upon what is barely possible, which shall suffice in this case. And this method must be permitted to all persons (except the Socinians will say, which I believe they do intend, that when they speak of reason they mean only *their own*, and that *their notions* are the great standard by which all other mens *opinions* are to be regulated) be their apprehensions of things never so wild and extravagant, as long as they are firmly perswaded of the truth of them. These are reason to them, to which every thing else must stoop, and either finally give way, or fairly be accommodated to it.

But 2dly, as the method is not *repugnant to reason*, so neither according to our adversaries, is it *prejudicial to Religion*, which consisting only in the practice of a holy life, it may likewise be consistent with the *denial* of any of the most Important *Articles* of the Christian faith. For there is scarce any thing relating to the *person* of Christ and what he *did* and *suffered* for us, nor indeed to any thing else which is *extra nos*, without us, which is of any great consequence to our salvation. The belief that *Jesus is the Messiah*, that is, owning him to be our *King*, and yielding an obedience to his Laws is the *unum necessarium*: and this is owned by *Gnosticks*, *Manichees*, *Quakers*, *Muggletonians*, and therefore we are bound to yield them the right hand of Fellowship, and to own them *pro veris in Christo Fratribus*, for true friends and Brethren in Christ.

Tell us not then, that I may imitate the Frank and open declaration of *Episcopus* upon the like occasion; of *Gnosticks*, *Valentinians*, *Marcionites*, *Pelagians*, *Seruetians* &c. There is no reproach really in these words, tho' vulgarly they are, by an ill custom which hath too long prevailed, reputed names of *Obloquy*: for whether you believe Christ to be *God* or only a *meer man*; whether you believe him to be a *true man* or a

Tanti est Remonstrantibus manifesta veritas, ut susque habeant, sive Socini, sive Serueti, sive Arrii, sive Pelagii, sive alterius exosissimi hominis nomen prescribant. Manifesta veritas non depreciatur in visis nominibus, prudentes non tententur vocibus hereticorum. Resp. ad specimen calumniarum. Open. Tom. II. p. 287.

Phantasm; and Consequently that his Miracles were delusions, his actions and sufferings all phantastical: lastly whether you affirm, or roundly deny that he was born or dyed, or rose again, either in *reality* or *Appearance*, you will find it all one in the conclusion; *Religion* is not concerned in these *speculations*. The *Manichees* took this latter course of getting rid of those *Articles* which they judged inconsistent with the honour of our Saviour: and therefore boldly affirmed that all this, *viz.* that concern'd his Birth and Sufferings, was forged and foisted into Gospels by others, since their first being written: and yet for all this they had a great concern for *piety*, if you believe their own professions. They, good men, were for reducing Religion from *speculation* to *practice*. They could not believe indeed the *doctrines* contained in the Gospel, but however they could obey its *precepts*. They did not look upon *Infidelity* to be such a Bugbear as some have represented it; however they were against *vice* and *immorality*, and that was every way sufficient.

To proceed. 2dly, I am to shew that this method if allow'd would soon overthrow the *practice* as well as the *doctrines* of Religion. And here I might run thro' the whole *Decalogue*, as before thro' the *Creed*, and shew it is liable in the same manner to be perverted. The two first commandments are design'd as a great bulwark and fence to the honour of God,

¶ Faustus dixit: Accipis Evangelium? Tu me interrogas utrum accipiam, in quo idipsum accipere apparet, quia quæ jubet observo. Ego patrem dimisi & matrem, uxorem, filios & cætera quæ Evangelium jubet, & interrogas utrum evangelium accipiam? nisi adhuc nescis quid sit quod Evangelium nuncupatur: est enim nihil aliud quam prædicatio & mandatum Christi. Et paulo post: accipere Evangelium in sola observatione constat cælestium mandatorum. ponamus, quia ita vis, duo hæc partes esse fidei perfectæ; quorum una quidem constat in verbo, id est, fateri Christum natum; altera vero in opere, quod est observatio præceptorum: vide ergo quam arduam ego & difficiliorem tibi partem elegerim; tu vide quam levis & faciliorem. Nec immerito plebs ad te confluit, a me refugit, nescius utique quia Regnum Dei non sit in verbo, sed virtute. Augustin. contra Faustum Manich. cap. 5.

by securing both the *unity* of his nature, and *unity* of his worship: by letting us understand that it is a high and daring piece of sacrilege, to rob him of either of these two; or suffering any person or thing whatsoever to share with him in them. And yet by a perverse Interpretation how easily, in spite of the plainest expressions, may *Polytheism* and *Idolatry* be introduced into the Church, as they are by *Papists* and *Socinians*. *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*, are the words of the first, great commandment; and indeed the foundation of all the rest. But how easily may this be eluded? You may think the *unity* of the *Godhead* is implied in this Command, and designed to be secured by it, but you are mistaken: for 'tis most certain, saith *Smalcus*, *certissimum est non unum tantum Deum verum esse*, that there is not onely *one* true God: for both *Angels* and *men* have been truly styled in scriptures, and called *Gods*. The former especially, as God's *legates* and *Representatives*, had a title both to the great name, viz. of *Jehovah*, and the peculiar worship of the true God. Nay the very *Ark*, and *Temple*, and *Cloud*, were all dignified with the same high title upon the account of a divine presence and *Inhabitation*. Lastly the man *Christ Jesus*, in the new testament, hath yet in a higher sense a just claim both to the same name and the same *Divine worship*, by reason of that *supreme power* which was conferred upon him by his Father, as the reward of his obedience and sufferings.

What then is the meaning of this command, may some say? why the plain meaning of it (if you rely upon the Exposition of our adversaries) is, first, to restrain you from making and

Neque enim Deus hoc praecepto potestatem sibi eripuit, eum quem velit, nobis praeficiendi & honorem suum eum eo communicandi: sed populum tantum obligavit, ne is pro suo arbitrio divinam cultum cuiquam exhiberet, huic, inquam, non sibi legem istam tulit. Volkel lib. 4. cap. 8. p. 200.

Deus hoc mandato, scil. illi soli servies, quo vetamur ullos alios praeter ipsum adorare, non est ita constrictus, ut ipsi integrum non sit aliis quoque talem potestatem communicare, ob quam illis honor adorationis ac servitii queat exhiberi: sed soli homines hoc mandato obligantur, ne extra divinum mandatum aut concessionem, ulli creaturae hunc honorem exhibeant. Wolz. Comment. in 4. cap. Matth. v. 10.

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reputing any *other Gods*, at your *own pleasure* and by your *own authority*. But God never design'd to lay any restraint upon himself, but that he might communicate a divine power and divine honours upon whom he thought fit.

2dly, When you are forbid to *have* and reverence any *other Gods*; this doth not absolutely exclude *alios*, ¹ all others, but *alienos*; such as you may fancy *equal to*, and *independent* upon him: such you must not own, as being *Rivals with*, and therefore put in *opposition* to his supremacy. But for *inferior* and *subordinate* Gods, those, with Gods *leave* and *permission*, you may *have*. Of this sort were, as we said before, the *Angels* under the old Testament; and the man *Christ Jesus* under the new; who since his Exaltation into Heaven is now constituted our *Lord and God*. To think therefore, especially since this new discovery, that there is but *one God*, is fit only for ² *Jews* and men of a lower understanding, who are governed by the *Letter* of the Scripture. Those who are *enlighten'd*, admitted into the *secret*, to view things beyond the surface and the letter, they know better things; they know that besides the *eternal, supreme, independent, self-originated*; there is another *Facitious, Junior, Inferiour, Modern* God, made so *to* other day in a manner, but yet

¹ *Aterius Dei nomine saltem eos, qui cum Deo nihil commune habent, & quibus si gloria vel laus aliqua tribuatur, ea ad ipsum Deum non referatur, excludi; non autem qui à Deo dependent, eique subordinati sunt. Et si Christus est Deus, nec unus essentia cum Deo patre, non tamen est alius Deus ab ipso: cum & divinitatem suam Deo patri acceptam referat, & qua Deus est, illi sit omnino subordinatus, ab eoque totus pendeat. Vide Socin. contra Wick. p. 545. & Defen. Animadvers. contra Eutrop. p. 655. Smalc. Refut. lib. 1. de Err. Arr. p. 16.*

² *Unum tantum summum Deum agnoscere, unum tantum natura Deum colere, unum tantum independentem Deum confiteri, est Judaicum aliquod & abnegatio quodummodo Christianæ Religionis. Smalc. Refut. Montr. cap. 2. p. 12. Idem repetit in Exam. Centum Err. p. 9. ubi illos, qui extra unum Deum qui talis natura est, alium qui natura Deus non sit, nempe Jesum Nazarenum colere renuunt, propius ad Judaismum quam ad Christianismum accedere, & Judaico-Christianam Religionem nobis obtrudere, pronunciat.*

a True God, and who claims your adorations in an equal manner with his Father.

To justify this interpretation, in the last place, you must consider the import of that preposition which we render *coram*, before, or *præter*, besides me; but it may likewise be rendered *super* or *contra* me, above me, or contrary to me: and then the meaning of the Command will be, not simply, that you shall not acknowledge any other thing or person to be God *besides me*; for you must know there are *Gods many and Lords many*; and that not only in vulgar account and estimation, but in truth and reality: but you must not think there are any Gods *superior* to me, nor any *equal*, or *inferior*, which you may put in *opposition* to, or place in a state of *independence* upon me; for this would be, in a very unwarrantable manner indeed, to have *Deos alienos coram Deo*: that is, as *Volkel* expresses it, *alienos Deos quasi in conspectum Dei producere, inque illius oculos, ut ægre illi fiat, colere*: this were indeed to *affront* and *grieve* him. But as for the owning and acknowledging *other Gods*, *besides* the supreme, provided it be with *his leave*, and by *his commands*, this is so far from being unlawful, that it becomes a necessary duty; and to do otherwise is a kind of restoring *Judaism*, and a renunciation of the Christian Religion; as we heard before from *Smalcus*.

Nay *Socinus* will tell you, That the great error and mistake of the *Heathens*, for which they were to be blamed was, not that they worshipped *more Gods than one*; but because they

I Affirmo Ethnicum errorem non in eo fuisse, quod non unum tantum Deum colerent; sed in eo præcipue, quod curam mundi atque hujus universitatis in plures deos distribuerent, qui nequaquam ab uno solo Deo penderent, à quo curam istam sibi demandatam habuissent, & cui essent subordinati, adeo ut eorum potestas & gubernatio & cultus, quo propter illam afficiebantur, ad illum unum Deum tota referretur &c. Quicquid Divini cultus Homini Jesu Christo nos tribuimus, id omne in unum illum Deum redundat, inque illius gloriam cedit; adeo ut inter nos & Ethnicos, in divinitate colenda, nulla prorsus sit similitudo, & merito profiteri & contendere possimus, nos non duas Deos, sed unum tantum colere. Socin. Resp. ad præfat. Wicki, p. 534.

placed them in a *coordination* and *equality* with the Supreme God, so that their dignity and divine worship was supposed to be *terminated* in them, and was not *referred*, as it ought, to the One Supreme.

Thus we see how a way is found out to expound away the first Commandment, which was design'd to secure the *unity* of the Godhead: and by the like method you may dissolve the obligation to the second, which was intended to secure the *unity* of his worship, by prohibiting the placing it upon *Images*, or any corporeal *representation* of things either in *Heaven* or *Earth*. Here one would think that the expressions are so plain and so full, that no tricks could be found out to elude the force of them. And yet by the same methods by which the *Socinians* have overturned the first, the *Papists* have made void the second Commandment.

And here first in general, the *Papists* will tell you that this Command doth not enforce a *moral duty*, of necessary and perpetual obligation: but was only of *positive* and *temporary* institution. This was the account that was given of this matter by some *Eminent Divines* of the *Roman* Communion at the beginning of the *Reformation*, such as *Catharinus*, *Dominicus à Soto* and others, followed herein by *Vasquez* and *Lorinus* of later date.

And why may not this as reasonably be affirmed of the *second* by the *Papists*, as it is of the *first* by the *Socinians*? *Volkel*, tells us that the Command to *worship God only*, belonged to the *Old Testament*, but we are freed from the obligation to it, now under the *New*: therefore, saith *Socinus*, *distin-*
gue

1 *Ipsa temporum diversitas hanc nostram sententiam ab omni contradictionis absurditate facile vindicat, cum mandatum, de solo Deo adorando, ad Veteris Testamenti tempora proprie spectare palam sit.* Volkel. lib. 5. cap. 29. p. 614.

2 *Nullo prorsus modo divina veritas evertitur, si id quod prius soli Deo debebatur, postea ex ejusdem Dei sive jussu, sive concessu, Christo quoque debetur, aut tribui potest. Cumque tempora sint diversa, nec Scripturæ discrepare dicenda sunt, nec ulla porro earum conciliatio querenda est.* An

gue tempora & conciliabis Scripturas. Formerly indeed he might appropriate this worship to himself, but that was a great many Ages ago: But now since the coming of Christ the times are changed, and so is the Command with them.

If this general account be not satisfactory, they will endeavour to give you satisfaction by descending to particulars. First therefore, whereas it is said, *thou shalt not make to thy self any graven image*; it should, as they tell us, be render'd as it is by the Septuagint, *ἄδωλον* an idol. Now an idol you must know is *nothing*, as being only the representation of *fictionous* and *imaginary* beings, which have no real existence in nature; such as are *Tritons*, *Sphynxes* and *Centaur*s &c. Now the *images* worshipped in the *Church of Rome* cannot with any reason be reputed *idols*, because they are the representations of *real beings*, so saith *Bellarmin. de Imagin. lib. 2. cap. 5.* And so saith *Godwin in his Answer to Bp. Stillingfleet.*

But it will be replied, as it is by *Protestants*: doth not the Command farther reach to the similitude of *real Beings*, when it tells us, *thou shalt not make to thy self the likeness of any of those things which are in Heaven or Earth &c.* This cannot be deny'd: but by *likeness* there must be understood such images as are supposed to be *true*, *adequate* representations of the *Divine* nature, or that are supposed to have some *inherent* sanctity, some *omnipotent* vertue or *Divinity* in them. These indeed they acknowledge to come within the compass of the prohibition, but not others which are not supposed to have any such *Divinity* inherent in them. For such you may *have*, and to such you may pay religious adoration.

But is not this against the express words of the Command, which saith, *thou shalt not bow down to them nor worship them?*

ita repente ejus vulgaris regulæ oblitus fuisti, Distingue tempora & conciliabis Scripturas. Socin. contra Francisc. Dau. cap. 17. p. 741. This is directly contrary to what they positively affirm at other times: and particularly to what *Socinus* saith in this very chapter, and the next page, particle 7. *Certum est non Christum modo, sed non paucas res creatas jure adoratas fuisse*, such as were the *Angels* under the *Old Testament*, *Ark*, *Temple*, &c.

That's true: but then in the Third place, when you talk of *Worship*, you must distinguish between that which is *Proper* and *Improper*; *Absolute* and *Relative*; *Supreme* and *Subordinate*; *Terminative* and *Transient*. The former indeed may be thought to belong only to God: but the latter you may Safely pay to Images.

My Business is not now to shew the falshood and frivolousness of these distinctions: but to let the Reader see that both *Papists* and *Pagans* who made use of the same artifices in their own Vindication; will be Justified by the rules of Expounding Scriptures laid down by the *Socinians*, and their practise consequent thereupon. For these produce the forementioned distinctions of the *Papists* to guard themselves from the Imputation of *Idolatry*, in paying divine Honours to our Saviour, whom they own to be but a *Creature*. And therefore it seems to be a vain attempt to think of securing the *Honour of God*, by any the most plain and clear Expressions, which can never be safe, if such wretched and perverse Interpretations be allow'd.

One would think that Declaration of God, cited by our Saviour, 4 *Matth.* 10. *thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, & αὐτῷ μόνῳ λατρεύεις, him only shalt thou serve*, should be placed out of the reach, and above the power of *Tropes* and *Distinctions*. You may imagine that word *μόνος*, to be very Emphatical, but when it comes to be Examined, it signifies very little. For whereas it is said, *Him only shalt thou serve*, the meaning is no more, then that you shall not own any other Gods, or worship them without his *Leave* or *Allowance*. For we must not be so injurious to God, as to think that by this precept he abridged himself of this liberty, tho' he hath confined the people within the bounds of it. *Populum tantum obligavit, atque Huic, non sibi legem istam tulit*, as *Volkel*. stated this matter.

But is there not another Scripture that cuts off all such preferences by telling us, that he will not give such *Leave*, or make any such *Allowance*? For saith God by the Prophet *Esay*, 42. v. 8. *I am the Lord, that is my name, and my Glory I will not give to another*. 'Tis true this last phrase seems to intimate some such thing; but when you come to examine it, it will be

be found to be as *insignificant* as that former command in *Matth.* For there are none of those words which seem to *appropriate* this Honour to God, but are capable of a different Construction from those, in which they are generally received and believed.

First, As to the word *Glory*, you must distinguish between that which is *proper* and *peculiar* to God, and that which is *similis*, very *like* it. The former he will not, the latter he may and hath communicated to his Creatures. But wherein I pray you, lies the great difference between these two sorts of Worship? why Herein; That when you Worship God, you consider him under the notion of a *Creator*, and the Original Author of All things; but when you pay Divine Honours to *Christ*, you consider him only as *Mediator*, endowed with supreme power to Enable him to Execute that high Office, so that the worship which is *proper* to God, as *rerum omnium principium*, is *absolutissimus* & *summus*, is the most perfect, and the highest that can be given; but that which is applied to *Christ* is *cultus secundarius*, a secondary, subordinate worship. For *Christ* being a *Mediator*, standing in the *midst* between God and man, he becomes thereby the *Medium* of Divine worship,

Gloria Dei duplici modo considerari potest: nam & ea Gloria Dei est, quæ ipsi propria est, & ea quæ similis ei est, quæ est Deo propria. Si priori sensu accipiaturs Dei Gloria, absolute dici potest, cum non dedisse Gloriam suam alteri, nec ipsi Jesu Christo. Non enim effecit Deus Christum talem, qui esset rerum omnium prima causa, quæ propria est Dei Gloria, sed illam sibi reservavit; licet interim Gloriam suam posteriori sensu acceptam, hoc est, similem ei quæ Deo propria est, Christo dederit. Smal. in Refut. Monstr. p. 26. May not any Idolaters justify themselves by this distinction, which will serve the turn of Papists and Pagans, as well as Socinians? For can they not excuse themselves by saying, that when they pay Divine Honours to a Creature, that they do not consider the Creature as the first Cause and Creator of all things, and particularly of it self? which would be a wild and senseless imagination, such as could never enter into the Head of any the most stupid Idolater, as implying a plain, and indeed the greatest of Contradictions, if there be any difference between them.

the way and means by whom we worship the Father; so that as to him, it is *transitive* and *ultimately terminates* upon God. By which you may plainly see, that the *Divine Honour*, or *Glory* which is communicated to our Saviour, is not that which is *proper*, and *peculiar* to God, but is only *similis*, like it.

But I am apt to think, when we come to examine this Answer more particularly, we shall find that this great difference, which they suppose, and by which they would preserve the Honour of God; will be found to be not in the nature of the worship it self, which we are now Enquiring after, but only in the *Object* about which it is conversant. For do they not place the same *external Acts* of Adoration, viz. of *Faith*, and *Hope*, and *Trust*, upon Christ as they do upon God? and do they not discover these by the same *External* expressions of *submission* and *reverence*? This cannot be deny'd: therefore they are forced to acknowledge, that the worship is the same in *uno respectu*, *sed non in alio*. But wherein lies this difference of *Respect*? why in this, that in the Acts of Adoration we consider God as the *first Author* and *Maker* of All things, as we said before; who is possessed of all Divine Perfections and Power, which are the foundation of Religious Honour, in and of himself; but our Saviour we consider as one who *derives* all his Ex-

I This was well urged against Socin. by Francis David in the fore-mention'd disputation, and the same Chap. *Quomodo hac Interpretatione effugiemus contradictionis implicationem. Solus Deus Adorandus & Invocandus est, Pater scil. Summus, non solus verum & Filius. At dices, non tanquam fons & origo, sed tanquam Mediator: nihil refert. Duo enim invocantur & coluntur. Pater enim Filius non est, & Filius Pater non est. Differentia enim in personis, non in ipsa invocatione statuitur. Docetur enim, a Filio quoque vera Cordis fiducia petenda esse bona Corporalia & Spiritualia. Hac autem ratione & Pater invocatur, & ab illo bona petuntur.* pag. 742.

2^a Etiam si eo respectu cultus qui Christo tribuitur non est ejusdem generis cum cultu unius Dei, scil. qui Deo debetur, ob rationem primi principii; potest tamen esse ejusdem generis alio respectu, quatenus scil, in iis rebus colitur quæ soli Deo propriæ sunt, & nemini Creaturarum debentur, Smal. Lib. cit. p. 92.

cellences from his Father, and therefore as Subordinate to him.

But this, as I said before, makes no alteration in the *Acts* of worship, but only in the *Object* of it; and therefore the difficulty will still remain; for is it not highly derogatory to the Honour of the Supreme God to joyn any of his Creatures in the same Acts of worship, which are his Glory, with him? and is not this *Giving His Glory*, that which properly belongs to him, to another? This is too plain to be deny'd: but perhaps some will say, this is not fair to urge men too far; you should be content with their general declarations; but since you will have it that the Worship is the same, take it with this Limitation, that it is *ejusdem Generis*, but not *ejusdem Speciei*, of the same Common Kind, but not of the same Specific nature.

But why I beseech you may not this be esteem'd *ejusdem Speciei*? is not this a Religious, Divine Worship which is paid to Christ? Yes it is. Are we not then bound to honour Christ, not only with external prostrations of the Body, but likewise with the internal submissions of the Mind, and of all the faculties of it, which must bend and stoop to his authority? Is not the next and immediate Ground of this Adoration the very same in both, viz. *Divinum Imperium*, that Supreme Empire and authority which was Originally indeed in the Father, but yet in an absolute manner and in the highest degree communicated from him to Christ? This cannot be deny'd.

Lastly, Are we not therefore bound, both by the nature of the thing, and the superadded, express command of God, to Honour the Son even as we Honour the Father? not only *Similiter*, but *Aequali Honore*, with the same Honour and Equal to that of the Father? This, when urged to it, they dare not but acknowledge, tho' it be contrary to their former explica-

1 *Ibid.* p. 89. Tho' Smalcus by this distinction would defend Socinus, yet Socinus himself doth not want his assistance, who acknowledges a specific sameness in the Worship of God and Christ. So in his answer to Volanus, p. 409. *Quod autem ait (scil. Volanus) eandem adorationis speciem in eo loco (Job. 5. 25.) Filio tribui quæ & Patri, id sane fateor; & propterea alteram altera non magis adorationem esse, facile concedo.*

tions of an *Inferior, Subordinate* Worship. This may be thought *hard*, to oblige men to contradict themselves: but however since you force them to such an acknowledgment, they are resolv'd you shall not be much the better for it; you must give them leave to *soften* it with a distinction, *⁊ Fatendum est Christum Aequali honore ⁊ cultu cum Deo Colendum esse, sed non simpliciter ⁊ absolute prorsus.*

This is such another sort of Evasion as Socinus was forced to betake himself to, when, having affirmed that our Saviour was possessed of an *Omnipotent* power, he was told that *Omnipotence* was the *Property* of God, and therefore being *Incommunicable*, (as the nature of every property is;) it could not be *Conferred* upon Christ; he reply'd, that God alone was *Omnipotent*, that is *infinite Omnipotens*, but however a *finite* Omnipotence might be communicated to our Saviour. A very wise distinction, and fit to be offer'd by this great *admirer*, and as some would have the world believe, a *perfect master* of reason.

But tho' these men thus mince and *qualify* this matter sometimes; yet upon other occasions they can express themselves more *openly* and roundly; and therefore without any reservation they will acknowledge a *Strict Equality* between the Ado-

1 Smalc. Refut. error. Arian. p. 93.

2 *Nihil prorsus est contra Scripturæ Analogiam, si duo æqualem potestatem in Ecclesia habere dicantur. Immo toti Scripturæ post Christum exhibitum id maxime est consentaneum. Agnoverunt Judæi Christum sese quadam ratione parem Deo facere; ⁊ ipsum in forma Dei, ⁊ æqualem Deo fuisse, aperte testatur Paulus Phil. 2. 6. Nullo autem modo absurdum est, ut duo sint æqualem habentes potestatem, quorum tamen alter alteri subjiciatur ⁊ subordinetur, ita ut non duæ sed una potestas censeatur. Socin. contra Fran. Dau. cap. 8. partic. 3. Filio ubique datam fuisse a Patre in rebus Ecclesiæ eandem potestatem, quam ipsi pater habet, verissimum est. Neque tamen Idem vel persona, vel essentia est Filius, qui Pater; sed Idem potestate. Ibid. partic. 2. p. 726.* Now since Divine Worship is, by the confession of our adversaries, founded in a Divine Power of Empire; and that *quam latè se divina potestas extendit, tam latè cultus adorationis porrigitur*, as Wolzogen. hath determined the matter in his Comment before cited on the 4th. *Matth. v. 10.* therefore since Christ is possessed of Equal Power with his Father, as is owned by Socin. the Wor-

Adoration of Christ and his Father; nay they will make him in some sense ¹ *Superior* to his Father. So that in the *Exercise* of that *Supreme Power* with which he is invested for the Salvation of Mankind, and to which divine worship is due, he is so far from *depending* upon God, or being *subject* to him; that he hath obtained *locum honoratiorem*, a more honourable station than He. And then we know that *major honos illi debetur, qui locum Honoratiorem obtinet*. By all which it appears notwithstanding the Shifts and Distinctions made use of by our adversaries, that, according to them, God hath given and communicated his own *proper Glory*, not only *Similem*, but *Aequalem*; that which is *like*, but *Equal*, and in some sense *Superior* to his own, in express contradiction to the declaration made in the *Text*.

But not too fast: Tho' it should be allow'd, that the *Glory* which is ascrib'd to Christ, is that which is *proper* to God, and the *same* with it, yet there is no *violation* of his *Decree* nor *alteration* in the *purpose* of God, who hath declared, that he will not give it to *Another*, which is the *2d.* word that must be explain'd. For this phrase of Giving *alteri*, to *Another*, properly respects ² *Deos alienos & peregrinos*; Forreign and different, or *opposite* Gods: but Christ cannot in any reason be judged such, who is not *Contrary*, but *Subordinate* to God, so that the Adoration of Christ is really the Adoration of God himself, who is worship-

Worship that is paid to him must be so too; and therefore lastly, tho' there is some difference in the Object of your adoration, yet there is none in the Act of adoration it self: for tho' you do not Consider Christ *tantumquam Supremus & primus auctor omnium*, yet *tam magno ac tam sancto honore afficiendus est, quam ipse pater affici solet*. as Wolzogen. in the same place states this matter.

¹ *Christus in usu suae potestatis, ob quam ipsi debetur adoratio, non dependet à Deo. Christus potestate sibi data ita utitur ut pater neminem judicet; hoc est, ita regit & gubernat ut patri subjectus nunc non sit. Deus Christo, in salute hominum procuranda, locum quodammodo Honoratiorem ad tempus concesserit.* Smalc. Exam. Cent. Err. p. 15.

² *Christus autem Deus alienus non est, siquidem Deus divinam suam caelestemque Majestatem cum illo communicavit, & hactenus unum eundemque secum effecit.* Catech. Racov. sect. 6. cap. 1. p. 170. Edit. Noviss.

ped in and by him. For you must know that the divine worship which is paid to Christ, doth not *permanere in ipso*, rest in him, but *ulterius pergit in Deum*, goes forward and is terminated in God, and therefore is properly the Worship of God himself. So that God in requiring us to give this Supreme Glory to his Son, doth not give it to another, but secures it to himself, for it is all at length settled in him, and redounds to his Honour.

But may not the Worship of any *Creature* be justified upon these terms, by saying, that we Worship them *for the sake* of God; for in them we Contemplate the Divine Power and Wisdom, so that the Adoration which is directed to them, the *Sun and Moon* for Instance, doth not in *ipsis permanere*, but *pergit ulterius*, passes through them, and is ultimately Terminated upon God; so that it is not the *Creature* so much that is worshipped, as the Great Creator himself, *utpote in quem tanquam in suum finem cultus dirigitur, & ubi tandem consistit*.

Now this Account will make the Worship of God and a Creature, and particularly of Christ, of whom we are now speaking, to be not only *eiusdem generis*, but *eiusdem speciei*; nay it must hereby be accounted *Idem numero*: not only *specifically*, but even *numerically* the same. For it is but *one and the same* Act of Adoration, (as some of the *Papists* state the matter between the *Image* and the *Exemplar* represented by it, which, according to them, make but *One Total*, compleat Object of Worship) that is directed to Christ and God: the former being only the Medium thro' which it passes; but the *Terminus ad quem*, or ultimate Object to which it is referred, and on which it finally rests, is God. This is quite contrary to what they affirm'd before, when they distinguished between *cultus proprius*,

¹ *Christi adoratio cum non permaneat in ipso, sed ulterius pergit in Deum, dicitur esse ipsius Dei. Similitudine quam attulit (scil. Socinus) nihil aliud ostendere voluit, quam proprie & simpliciter loquendo, adorationem licet Christo exhibitam & consequenter ipsi communicatam, non ipsius tantum, sed Dei etiam debere dici, utpote in quem tanquam suum finem dirigeretur, & ubi consisteret. Socin. Disp. contra Franken. p. 777.*

and *similis*; *eiusdem generis* and *eiusdem speciei*. But contradictions are Common with them, and in this Case cannot be avoided.

Lastly, There is another word in this Solemn Declaration that must be Consider'd and Explain'd, otherwise you may be lead into mistakes by it; and that is the word *Giving*, I will not *Give my Glory* to another. Where by *Giving* first, you are not to understand a ¹ *bare Communication*, but such a sort, as when you transfer upon another what belongs to God, so as to *deprive* him of it, or at least to *lessen* and *diminish* what is so given. This would be the Case, if God should part with his *Glory* to them that are not placed in a *due Subordination*, but rather in *Opposition* to him. But as for his Friends, or any of his Creatures, if considered under the notion of Dependence and Subjection to him, there is nothing unlawful, as far as I can perceive, in this; because there is nothing in it, *injurious* to God, or that *derogates* from his Honour. Thus the *Heavens*, for Instance, may claim your Adorations, because they are so far from *diminishing* the Glory of God, that they *proclaim*, and thereby wonderfully augment and *magnify* it.

But Secondly, You must know that the word *Giving*, doth not in this place signify to *bestow* or *communicate*, but to *permit*; so that the true meaning of this Expression is, that God will not permit, *ut quisquam* ² *se invito gloriam suam usurpet*; that

¹ *Loquitur Deus de tali Gloriæ suæ datione, qua fit ut ipse Gloria sua privetur; vel saltem aliquid illi de Gloria sua decedat; utpote cum illis tribuitur qui cum Deo nihil commune habent, illiusque sunt adversarii.* Schlickting. cont. Meisn. p. 234.

In verbis illis apud Esaïam, sine dubio de ita Gloria danda agitur, ut ea non amplius dantis sit; hoc enim alteri sive alii suam Gloriam dare proprie significat. Socin. Lib. cit. p. 774. And yet in this very sense of the word *Giving*, God might be said, *aliquo modo*, in a certain sense so to communicate part of His Glory to Christ, *ut eam sibi non retinuerit.* Testatur Christus ipse, *Patrem non Judicare quenquam, sed omne iudicium filio dedisse*, Jo. 5. v. 22. As the same Socinus states it.

² *Illud Esaïæ dictum sic est interpretandum, Non permittam alteri meam gloriam: vel non sinam meam gloriam ab altero arripi & sibi arrogari contra meam voluntatem.* Id. Ibid. p.

any other person should by *usurpation* lay claim to the Glory of God, without his knowledge, or against his consent; otherwise with his *leave* and *approbation* you may ascribe Divine honours to another. But this is, as *Christian Franken* told *Socinus*, *Oppositum per oppositum interpretari*: an active verb, *non dabo*, by a passive, *non patiar*, I will not suffer any other to rob me of my honour, and to wrest it from me by *usurpation* and *violence*. But that is all one: when you cannot otherwise support your cause, you may bring in to your assistance unusual Figures, and by the help of them substitute one *case*, as by an *Antiptosis*, for another. And for the same reason by the help of an *Enallage*, one *Mood*, *Tense* or *Voice* for another.

By all this we see how little regard these men have for God Almighty, notwithstanding their great pretences to piety; and how roughly they handle him in the *tendrest part*, and which he can no more endure should be touch'd than he would *the apple of his eye*: I mean his *worship*, of which he hath all along declared himself so *jealous*, that he hath threaten'd to revenge the violation of it, not only upon the *persons*, but likewise upon the *posterity*, even to the *third and fourth Generation*, of such as dare to affront him. And yet these bold men shew no such regard to the *command* or the *threatning*, as to be directed by the one, or deterred from transgressing it by the other: but go on in an open contradiction to the *authority* of God, not only refusing to comply with, but which is the greatest indignity that can be offer'd him, seeming to make a *jest* of his prescriptions. Who can think otherwise that reads the foremention'd account, whereby they *play and dally* with the honour of God, tossing it *backward* and *forward* with their *impious distinctions*, sporting with it as you would with a feather in the air, which may be driven hither and thither with the breath of your mouth?

We see the methods by which they have weaken'd the force of those two great commands of the *first Table*, which were enacted to secure the honour of God. And by the very same, how easily may the obligation to those of the *second* be eluded? For can

words

words have a greater efficacy to secure the right, property, and interest that men have in their life, estate, good name; than they have to preserve the honour and reverence due to Almighty God?

Before I descend to particulars, the *Reader* is desired to remember that the great pretence which our adversaries make use of to justify their *infidelity*, viz. *Reason*, will equally serve to excuse their *disobedience*; for you are no more obliged to *obey*, than you are to *believe*, either *without* or *against* reason. If therefore a *duty* be prescrib'd, which seems *opposite* to the *Ideas* which you have framed of *truth*, *justice* and *equity*, (no matter what they are in themselves, tho' never so wild and extravagant, provided you are firmly perswaded of the truth of them) then you may either *reject* that precept, or which will be a more decent, but to all intents as effectual a way of destroying it, *expound* it in such a manner as may make it consistent with your notions. And how easy a matter will it be by the help of *figures* and *distinctions*, to distort the plainest words, and thereby pervert their meaning so far, as to reconcile the *prohibition* with the *practice* of the greatest impiety?

First therefore to get rid of the whole obligation to that part of the *Law*, which prescribes our duty to our *Neighbours*; it may be said that it was only *temporary*, and properly respected the *Jews*, who were under a *Legal Dispensation*; but that we under the *Gospel* are set free from the *Law*, *that being now dead under which*, before the coming of Christ, the world *was in bondage*. It is not fit therefore that we should submit to any such *servile restraints*, which are so opposite to that *liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free*. The *Gnosticks* of old, and some *Anabaptists*, *Antinomians*, and other *Enthusiasts* of later years have argued at this rate: and thereby have encouraged themselves in the practice of all manner of licentiousness and impurity.

And why have they not as good a title to this *plea*, with relation to the precepts of the *second*, as the *Papists* and *Socinians* have with respect to the two first commands of the

first Table? who by affirming that they were only *temporary* and *arbitrary precepts*, have thereby introduc'd *Polytheism* and *Idolatry* into the Christian Church, to the great dishonour of God, and scandal of the Christian Religion, as we shew'd before.

But secondly, if this method be not thought so advisable; you may pretend a seeming reverence for the commands, and preserve *the words* in which they were deliver'd: but yet you may easily reconcile them to your *lusts, passions, pleasure* and *interest*; so that in compliance with them, you need not part with, or deny your selves in the practice of any thing that may be either of advantage or delight. This is actually done to your hands by several of the *Romish Casuists*, both *Jesuits* and *others*; justified herein by the rules of exposition laid down and made use of by the *Socinians*.

The sixth Command prohibits *murther*: but how easily may this be eluded, by some preconceiv'd *notions*, which men's *passion, revenge, honour* may suggest to them? which may be reason to them, and if the Command appears *contrary* to reason, it must be interpreted in a sense that is *consistent* with it. *Thou shalt not kill*; that is, may some say, out of *wantonness*, but with good ground you may. The *magistrate* arm'd with authority may put *malefactours* to death, and that's no *murder*. And so may a private man *se defendendo*, in defence of his *life*: and why not of his *honour* which is dearer to him than his *life*? So some of the *Romish Casuists* have determin'd the point, and thereby have encouraged the *Italian* and *Spanish Bravoes* and others, in this detestable practice. And have not matters of a more publick and dangerous consequence, viz. *Rebellion, the murther and deposition of Princes* been practis'd and defended by the same men, and by the help of the like arguments and distinctions, in opposition to the *fifth Commandment*?

Again, The seventh Precept forbids *adultery*: if this may seem to lay too great a restraint upon men's inclinations and desires; how easily may you soften it by saying it ought to be construed of *Spiritual Adultery*, viz. *Idolatry*, and the worship of *strange Gods*, which in the old Testament is so often stiled

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Fornication; and they who were guilty of it, are said to forsake God, and to go a whoring after Idols.

Again, *Thou shalt not steal*. This is no effectual security against *theft* and *rapine*, because you may find out ways of reconciling these to the prohibition. *Theft* is said to be the taking away from another what is his peculiar *right* and *property*: but there are two principles which have been advanced, and obtained among some men, which will quite overthrow this definition. The first is that of the *Anabaptists* and other *Levellers*, who have maintain'd that all things by the Law of nature should be in *common*; and therefore that all other positive constitutions which limit and circumscribe this Right, are either to be *abolished*, or *interpreted* in a sense agreeable to that great *fundamental Charter* of our priviledges. In short, all those *Enclosures* which have been since made and continued, ought to be broken down, as being opposite to the *first* and *natural Rights* of mankind: which cannot be taken from them: *viz.* justly: and where they have been invaded, they may be resumed again, with greater reason than they were at first parted with.

The second principle, by which robbery may be justified, is that of the *Enthusiasts* and *Fifth Monarchy Men*: who affirm that the wicked have no Right to what they are possessed of; their wealth being founded in injustice and usurpation, to the prejudice of the claim of the Righteous, who by the express promise of God are *to inherit the Earth*. To rob them therefore is so far from being opposite, that it is agreeable to the pleasure of God; for it is only to *spoil the Egyptians* in order to enrich the *Israelites*, who are God's peculiar people, and *the Earth* therefore *with the fulness thereof* is their peculiar Inheritance. The *Anabaptists* in *Germany* acted their wild pranks in pursuance of this principle, and justified their actions by it.

Lastly, to sum up in a few words the incomparable and unspeakable mischief of this *Socinian* method; let it suffice to say; that the *Foundations* of all *Governments* and *Societies* may hereby be overturned, which are built upon *Laws* and the principles of *truth* and *justice*; without which there can be
neither

neither contract, nor dealing, nor commerce between private persons; nor leagues or alliances between States and Princes. But by our adversaries *rules* of expounding words, a way may be found out to defeat all these by crafty and *fraudulent interpretations*; and at the same time to introduce an universal jealousy and distrust in the affairs of civil life, by destroying all faith and confidence between man and man: no agreement, bargain or stipulation, tho' expressed in never such *plain words*, and attended with the most *solemn promises*, and these farther confirmed, if you please, with the most *sacred oaths*: and in short, neither the declarations nor writings of the living, nor the wills and Testaments of the dead, can be safe in themselves, or can afford men any security, since such ways of expounding may be found out, whereby they may all be eluded, particularly by the help of *Tropes and Figures*.

A *mental reservation* shall be justified by an *Ellipsis*, or an *Apophysis*. The plainest affirmations may be construed to a contrary or different meaning by *Ironies* (under which we may comprehend an *Antiphrasis*) *Hyperboles*, *Metaphors*. The structure of words, and with them the sense and interpretation may be quite alter'd, by the help of *Hyperbatons*, *Hypallages*; by an ἐμπλοκή, or μετὰθεσις both comprehended under the name of *Synchysis*, implying the commixtion, transposition or inversion of words, or sentences. I could give you instances of all these in our adversaries ways of *expounding the Scripture*. The History of the *Creation* hath been overturn'd by an *Allegory*, as we shewed before. *David's confession* of his original corruption and impurity, *Psal.* 51. hath been evaded by an *Hyperbole*¹. Our Saviour's *preexistence* plainly enough affirmed in those words of *St. John*, *Before Abraham was I am*, hath been overthrown by an ἀμφιβολία: our Saviour it seems did *equivocate* with the *Jews*, saying one thing

¹ So *Socinus* would have it understood, *Præl. Th. cap. 4.* And so *Limbroch* chimes after him; *David ut Deum ad misericordiam flectat, dicit se in iniquitate genitum, Hyperbolica loquendi ratione innuere volens temperamentum suum sanguineum.* Lib. 3. cap. 4. sect. 16.

and meaning quite another, on purpose to delude them, and when he had so done, for he did *ludere in ambiguo*, as Schlichting words it, he made himself sport with their deceptions.

The propagation of *Original Sin* from *Adam*, and that all mankind have been involved in the guilt and punishment of his transgression, one would think were fully delivered by *St. Paul*, *Rom. 5.* in very plain and with great variety of Expressions; and yet this is easily refuted, by saying that *St. Paul* did not believe those things himself, but only accommodated himself to a doctrine that pass'd for current among the *Jews*, as did a great many more senseless tales which they received from their *Cabalistical writers*.

The doctrine of our Saviour's *Priesthood* and *Sacrifice*, tho' of the highest importance, as upon which depend all our hopes of pardon and reconciliation to God; is entirely undermin'd by the help of *Allusions* and *Metaphors*. The chiefest part of the service of God under the old Testament consisted in offering sacrifices; therefore under the new Testament, saith Mr. le Clerk, in allusion to that practise, all the offices of piety in a manner are styled sacrifices; and so is the death of Christ for the same reason, because it was the great instance of his piety, and submission to the will of his Father.

Again, our Saviour is frequently stiled a *Priest*, and a very extraordinary one too, viz. after the order of *Melchisedeck*: yea and made such likewise after an extraordinary manner, even by the solemn and immutable Oath of him that said, *The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou shalt be a Priest for ever, &c.* But saith the same Authour, "this is not literally true; 'tis affirm'd "only by way of Accommodation to the concessions of the *Al-* "legorical Interpreters among the *Jews*. These Idle Rabbins ac- "commodated innumerable places to the *Messiah*; but no Ar-

i Ad opiniones passim respicitur. Ita cum Judæorum præcipua in di-
vino cultu ceremonia in sacrificio esset, ideo in novo Testamento, omnia fere
pietatis officia sacrificii nomine interdum indignantur. Mors Christi sa-
crificium quoque vocatur, quod præcipua fuerit ejus pietatis pars, & quæ-
dam habeat sacrificiis similia. Artis Criticæ p. 1. cap. 1. p. 52.

"gument can be drawn from these places, if you consider the "things in themselves. 'Tis true, the Apostle argues from "these *Rabbinical* whymfies, but it is only an *argumentum ad hominem*, reasoning with these fanciful men from their own concessions, which were in themselves false and frivolous, and therefore would be of no force against other men. See *Dr. Whitby's Annotations* on Heb. 7.v.3. and Heb. 9.v.20. where he justly censures and chastises this bold man for his *vile reflections* on the sacred penmen; whereby he exposes them and their writings to the contempt and scorn of *Libertines* and *Antiscripturists*. For what can be more effectually urged to *undermine* their *authority*, than to say, that they *proceeded upon weak grounds, drew consequences from false principles, urged arguments without regard to the rules of Grammar or just sense, only in compliance with the customs of the Age.*

Well, but tho' their arguing be weak and fallacious, yet they did it, it is to be hoped, with a pious design and to a good end, which will sanctify these undue means: particularly *St. Paul to the Jews became a Jew*, accommodating himself to their *foolish notions*, that thereby he might win them over to the profession of the Christian Religion. Sometimes *Mr. le Clerk* will allow this; but at other times, and particularly in his observations on *Heb. 9. v. 20.* he tells his Readers, that that whole discourse about our Saviour's being the *Mediator of a new Testament*, was only the *Trifling of an Hellenistical writer, who played with the ambiguity of words, and that rather to set off his discourse, than to convert the Jews to the faith by the force of reasoning*: tho' by the by, it seems to be but a very odd way of setting off a Discourse, to adorn it with false principles, and fallacious reasonings.

Lastly, as the *Apostles*, and particularly *St. Paul*, speak of *our Saviour* by way of *allusion* to the customs and opinions of the *Jews*; so our Saviour *himself*, it seems, makes use of the same method in speaking of the condition and state of Souls departed; for in the 16. of *St. Luke*, in that famous *Parable of Dives and Lazarus*, where he represents the very different fates of those two persons after death, *viz.* that *Dives* was sent to
bell,

hell, a place of torment; whilst *Lazarus* was convey'd by *Angels* into *Abraham's Bosome*, a place of rest and happyness: *Wolzogen* in his Commentary saith, that in this description our Saviour had no regard to *truth*, (for this account contain'd a downright falshood) but only to some *ridiculous, absurd notions* which then pass'd for current among the *Jews*: you ought therefore to be inform'd, that this whole account that you may meet with here or elsewhere in the Scripture about the *invisible mansions of separated spirits* in the other world, in which the souls of the righteous are supposed to be in joy and rest, and those of the wicked to be in misery and torment, was a *Fable* first invented by the *Greeks*, from whence it was conveyed to the *Jews*; and from both was borrowed and brought by the Fathers into the *Christian Church*, where it meets with entertainment and belief to this very day.

For you must know, that the *souls* of men, both Good and Bad, after their separation from the body, tho' not quite annihilated, yet remain in a *sleepy* or rather *senseless* condition, neither capable of pleasure, nor sensible of pain. The *Jews* indeed thought otherwise; and so one would think our Saviour did. For tho' as to the *circumstantial* parts of this *Parable*, he doth, as the nature of the thing required, enlarge and adorn it with *figurative descriptions*; yet as to the *main scope and design*, which was to give an account of the different

1 Per infernum figurate designatur locus quidam, ubi Mors tanquam Rex, quidam imperat, & quo ex opinione Judaeorum animae mortuorum commeabant. Fabula ista de Inferno ad Judaeos à Græcis manavit: à Judæis & Græcis postmodum veteres Ecclesiae Patres eam hausserunt, à quorum tempore ad hodiernum usque diem, viget in Christiano orbe opinio, quod Justorum animae illico post separationem à corpore, caelestibus fruuntur gaudiis: Impiorum animae infernali igne excruciantur. Animae enim, extra corpus, neque cruciatu neque gaudio ullo affici queant, Comment. in cap. 16. Lucæ. v. 23. Anima sine corpore neque solatio, neque tristitia affici potest, Ibid. v. 25. Nullum est dubium Christum ex communi Judaeorum opinione, quam de statu damnatorum post mortem fovebant, locutum fuisse, Id. in cap. 10. Matth. v. 21.

events that happen to the righteous and the wicked, immediately after their dissolution, we cannot without great impiety imagine but that he did believe the truth of it himself, and intended to form a belief of it in the minds of his hearers. And yet it seems, by the account given of it by our Adversaries, there was no other foundation for this, but only some *foolish and fabulous* conceits which obtained among the *Jews*, to which our Saviour *alludes* in this discourse.

But is not this a scandalous account, and doth it not plainly lay the blame of this *erroneous opinion* upon our Saviour, together with those other superstitious ¹ conceits and practises, which, as our adversaries tell us, have been since grafted upon it? For if he had not *accommodated* his sermons to these mistaken notions, which he doth without giving the least intimation that they were all fiction and figure, the Christian world would never have given entertainment, as they now do, to these idle tales. *St. Paul* charges *Timothy* not to give heed to *Jewish Fables*; and yet being unmindful of his own advice, in several of his *Epistles*, it seems, he takes them for granted; argues from them: raises conclusions and establishes several doctrines of the greatest importance upon them. These are *perfect riddles*, and how to reconcile them to the *integrity*, and thereby to the *reputation* of the sacred writers, is what surpasses all imagination. By what hath been said it is plain that the *holy Scriptures* have been wrested and misconstrued by these men to very evil purposes; and why I pray may not any other *words or writings* be in like manner *perverted*, and thereby an universal distrust introduced into the Affairs of civil life? which

¹ *Ex antiqua Judaeorum Fabula (scil. de igne Gehennæ) traxit originem Purgatorius Papistarum ignis.* Id. in cap. 5. Matth. v. 22. See a late discourse published against the Immortality of the Soul; where the Author enlarges upon this Head, and takes a great deal of pains to convince his Readers, that Purgatory, Prayers for the dead, Invocation of Saints with divers other superstitious practises were owing to this Paganish opinion, as he styles it, of the separate Existence and Immortality of the Soul.

I mention'd as the last unspeakable mischief, that might be the consequence of these rules of Exposition laid down by our adversaries.

Suppose a man hath made a *disadvantageous bargain*, and then in order to defeat the person with whom he hath contracted, should declare that he never *meant* to do so foolish a thing and so plainly against his interest. Well! but how shall we know your *meaning*, may the other party contracting say, but by *your words*, which are the signs and significations of it? 'Tis true, may he reply, my words seem to intimate some such thing, but yet I never *intended* them in such a sense, and I am the best judge of my own meaning; And then in vindication of this fraud, we will suppose him to construe his expressions in some *far-fetch'd, remote sense*, which, by the help of *unusual figures*, may be wrested and strain'd to a meaning quite different from what they literally import. What opinion think you would the world have of such a man? why, to be sure they could not otherwise judge of him, but that he was a very *dishonest*, and a very *dangerous* person, whose company and conversation every body ought to avoid, who hath any regard to his own *interest*, or the *peace, order and common safety* of mankind; because he hath introduced such a *treacherous* way of interpreting words, whereby the truth of all matters of fact may be destroyed, and consequently all *security and confidence* between man and man, by vertue of any *bargain and contract*, may be undermin'd.

And yet how mischievous soever this practice is, men may be warrant'd in it; and appeal to the holy writings for their vindication. For our adversaries in their *expositions* of them, plainly tell us, that the sacred penmen did not always *speak as they thought*; that they did *write* one thing and *mean* quite another. That our Saviour himself did plainly *equivocate*, made use of *ambiguous* expressions on purpose to *delude* his hearers, and then pleas'd himself with their mistakes. It is no wonder then that his *Apostles* should follow so *honourable an example*; who in their writings, *argue from wrong principles*, utter

downright and deliberate falsehoods, only in *allusion* to the opinions, and *accommodating* themselves to the *customs of the Age*: and thereby did wonderfully confirm men in the belief of certain *idle tales and fables* which obtain'd in those days, and by these means have been continued down to these we live in.

Now for my part I cannot imagine, if this liberty may be allowed with the *holy Scriptures*, but that it may be as lawful to pervert any *humane writing*, be it *Deed, Conveyance or Testament*, and thereby defeat and defraud my neighbour. Nay I should rather think that the advantage should lie on the side of the first, and that a more religious and conscientious regard ought to be had for the *divine writings* which contain the *mind and pleasure of God*, than for those which declare the *will of men*. To pervert the one is a piece of injustice against *our Neighbour*; but to wrest the other is to bid plain *desfiance*, and to act in *despight against the Holy Ghost*.

Neither is it sufficient to say, that a greater regard ought to be had to *truth* in civil conversation and *dealing* between man and man, than in the *affairs of Religion*; in which a greater *liberty* of thought and *latitude* of opinion is to be allowed. This is a very scandalous plea, not fit to be offer'd by any man who is *called by the name of Christ*, and that owns his dominion and sovereignty over the *minds and consciences* of his subjects, and consequently, that all their *opinions and persuasions* in Religion, ought to be *limited, regulated and determined* by those discoveries and *revelations* which he hath given us in his word. For tho' in matters of *lesser consequence*, not *plainly* revealed, there may and must be room left for *variety of Opinions*, and *Expositions*: yet to extend this to all doctrines even of the *highest importance*, as they have always been judged to be in the Christian Church: which is the Case between us and the *Socinians* and their friends and favourers the Remonstrants, I say thus to extend our allowance, is not the effect of *true Christian Moderation*, but of some other worse principle; and we may venture to repeat what we have formerly affirmed of such *peaceable, charitable* men, as they would be accounted, let

let their qualifications or accomplishments be otherwise what they will, that they neither have such *true notions* of *Revealed Religion*, nor so *just a concern* for it as becomes them.

But for all this it will be said, that though it should be allowed that *Religion* may be in danger by these practises; yet the *civil peace and order*, which depends upon the regard that men have for *truth* and *Justice*, may be safe enough from any attempts that are like to be made upon them by these men. For we do not find that in their *contracts* and *dealings*, they have made use of any such *perverse interpretations*; and therefore the Jealousies rais'd against them upon that score are so remote, that they need not give us any suspicion or disquiet.

I Answer First, that tho' they *have not in fact*, yet they *may*, whenever they please, put these methods in practice, even in these civil affairs. And I cannot find, upon the grounds which they have laid down; that they are like to be deterred from so doing by any considerations taken from *Conscience and Religion*. The *Civil laws* indeed which condemn such practices, and a regard to their own reputation, may go a great way to prevent them. But that they should abstain from deceit and falshood, out of a *conscientious* regard to *truth* and *justice* may be doubted. For in the name of all that is sacred, is there not as great a reverence to be shewed to those writings which have been penn'd by the inspiration and direction of *God*, as to those which have been composed by *men*? Nay doth not the advantage, as we said before, lie on the side of the former? Is not the *Authority* greater, and *subject matter* of them of a more weighty importance? Yes sure, as much as the Soul is more valuable than the Body, or the Kingdom of Heaven exceeds any *Earthly Inheritance*.

But 2dly, To come a little closer to the matter in hand, it may easily be made to appear, that these *Rules and Principles* have so far influenc'd them, (for I cannot well tell to what other cause it should more probably be assigned) though not in *personal dealings* and *contracts*, yet in *promises*, *protestations*, *subscriptions*, *publick declarations*, when they have been called

to

to an account before Magistrates, or otherwise examin'd about their Faith and Perswasions in Religion; they have shewn no regard to truth; but have *shuffled* and *prevaricated*, saying and *unsaying*, sheltering themselves under *general and ambiguous expressions* which are capable of being construed to different significations. And I could shew thro' all the Ages of the Church, down from *Simon Magus* to *Socinus*, and much lower, even to our times, how that *Hereticks* have constantly made use of this pernicious practice in order to prevent a detection, and thereby to *escape the censures* that otherwise their impious opinions would render them justly liable to.

Now the World sure must acknowledge this to be a detestable piece of *prevarication*; and tho' it be in an affair of Religion, yet the mischief will reach farther, and may have a dangerous influence upon the *peace, order, and security* of the Civil Government, whenever the Magistrate, who is *custos utriusque tabulae*, shall think fit to make *Laws* and appoint *publick Tests* for the preservation of Religion, which is so nearly twisted and interwoven with the *Publick Safety*, that they cannot well be separated. What wiser and better human provision can be made for the preserving the Religion professed in any Church, than by *Articles* publicly agreed upon, and a *Subscription* farther requir'd to them by the Members of it's Communion? But to what purpose is it, as long as ways may be found out to elude the whole design of this by a *fraudulent Interpretation*? Is there any greater efficacy in the words in which the *Articles* are framed than in those of the *holy Scriptures*? These we see have been perverted by evil men, and why may not the former, and the known and designed meaning be eluded, by *figurative*, and even by a *Grammatical Construction*?

The Article concerning *Three Persons* shall be subscrib'd by a *Sabbellian*, who when he comes to explain his own sense of it, shall tell you he means thereby only *one person*, properly so call'd, under three different *names, offices or manifestations*. A *Tritheist* shall confess the *unity* of nature in the *Three Persons*, but by that he shall mean only a *specifical* unity whereby the *Three Persons*

Persons in the Blessed Trinity, shall be made and accordingly accounted *three distinct Gods*. An *Arian* shall own the *Divinity* of Christ, and that he is *God of God, very God of very God*; and yet reconcile these words to the belief of an *Inferior, Created, Temporal God*. A *Nestorian* shall allow the *union* of two natures in Christ, and subscribe if you please, that these are united in *One Person*; and yet mean no more than a *Figurative, Local or Moral Union*; so that this one *Nominal, Figurative*, shall be *Two Real, Proper, Distinct Persons* to all intents and purposes. A *Pelagian and Remonstrant* shall acknowledge and subscribe to the doctrine of *Original Sin*, and yet not in the least intend thereby to own the *corruption and depravation* of human nature; but only that it is a *weakness and infirmity* join'd with *concupiscence* or tendency to Sin, which was found, as *Limb.* tells us, even in our blessed Saviour himself; who in that remote, improper sense might be stiled a *sinner* as truly as we are, *viz.* upon the account of this *Original Sin*, as we stile it. For *Christ offered for his own Sins*, saith *Socinus*, as well as did the *High-priest of old*.

Now this, *prima fronte*, at first view, seems to be an opinion *falsissima & blasphemiae plena*; as he himself acknowledges. But how then shall he make good this Affirmation? why, by the help of *figures* it may easily be done. First we know that *Sin* is sometimes put for the *punishment* of Sin; the Cause for the Effect: this must be allowed, for it is frequently so used in the Scriptures. Secondly *Punishments* may be construed to signify only *Afflictions* and Calamities; because there is in them something that *resembleth* punishment, tho' they are not strictly such. When Christ therefore is said to

1 De Christo Servatore, parte secunda, cap. 22. Christi infirmitas, id est, non patibilis tantum natura, ex qua necessario perpeffiones istae non fluunt, sed status ac conditio patiendi in qua ex Dei decreto positus erat, in causa fuit ut pro se quoque in malis ac afflictionibus constitutus offerret. Atque haec peccatis pontificis antiqui in hac comparatione respondent, & propterea per variegationem quandam sub uno peccatorum nomine cum iis comprehenduntur. Crell. in Epist. ad Hebr. cap. 5. v. 3.

offer for his own sins, the meaning is, that he offered up his prayers, and himself to his Father, by which he obtain'd deliverance from those afflictions and infirmities which he was subject to, which, by a *Catachresis*, might be stiled Sins. So then, first by a *Metonymy*, and then a *Metaphor* grafted upon that *Metonymy*, all this Blasphemy may be reconciled to truth and piety, and so *quidlibet potest fieri ex quolibet*.

Lastly, A Socinian when he speaks of the efficacy and effects of the death of Christ, he shall make use of the words, *Redemption, Reconciliation, Atonement, Propitiation, Expiation*, nay, *Merit* and *Satisfaction*; but shall construe them in a sense quite different from that in which they have always been understood in the Christian Church. He shall acknowledge that the Sufferings of Christ were a ¹ *Punishment*, his Death a *Sacrifice*: that he was made a *Curse*, and an ² *Expiatory Victim*, and that by one *Sacrifice* he hath sanctified all that believe in him. He shall own that Christ by his obedience in submitting to the Death of the Cross, hath paid a just ransom for our Redemption: nay, that this λόγος was a sufficient, or if you please, an *Allsufficient price*, and such as was ³ *equipollent* to the punishment of all mankind. Who would think to meet with this *Scholastick, Metaphysical doctrine of Equivalents* in the writings of a Socinian?

¹ Merito dici potest, Christum qui peccatum non fecit peccata nostra sustinuisse, & si placet, pœnas quoque aliorum dedisse. Ita in Christum ideo iniquitatem omnium incurrisse, adeoque ipsam iniquitatis pœnam à Deo in Christum conjectam fuisse scriptum est. Socin. Præl. Theol. cap. 21.

² Sociniani testantur se credere Christum voluntati Patris sui in omnibus, quæ is illi peccatorum nostrorum causa agenda patiendaque imposuit, abunde satisfacisse, adeoque peccata nostra corporis sui victimam expiasse, Ruar. Epist. Vol. I. p. 594. & Epist. 68. agnoscit Christum summum fuisse Sacerdotem qui se Deo victimam piacularem pro genere humano obtulerit. p. 297.

³ Agnosco etiam obedientiam, quam Christus tanquam caput Electorum omnium, in vita & multo magis in morte summam Deo præstitit, sufficiens esse λόγος pro peccatis nostris, adeoque Equipollens supplicio quod nos peccatis nostris eramus meriti. Ruar. ibid. Epist. 69. p. 271.

This is not all: he shall confess his Faith in the *blessed Trinity* in the same words as we make use of. He will tell you that he doth *ex animo*, sincerely believe in the *Father, Son and Holy Ghost*, and in this *Trinity* he shall acknowledge a *Unity*. He shall confess Jesus Christ to be the *Son of God*, and adore him as the *Very or True God*, and partaker of the Divine Nature; nay he will not deny, but that the *same Divinity* is in the *Father, Son and Holy Ghost*.

What can you desire more of these men? One would wonder how there comes to be any *quarrel* between us and them, when there is no *difference* in our Expressions. But a great difference there is between us still: and if you would know wherein it lies, why truly it lies here, in that we *mean* as we *speak*; they harbour a *meaning* not only *different*, but sometimes quite *contrary* to what the words import, that is, as they are generally received and understood. And therefore what they at some times plainly affirm, at other times they shall confidently deny, and then reconcile these Contradictions by *tanquam's* and *quasi's*; by an *aliquo sensu*, a *certa ratione*, and *la- xiore significatu*: by these and such other limitations where- with they think fit to qualify their expressions, they can *unite* things that are at the *greatest distance*, and thereby can

I Solet vulgo probrose objici quod sanctam Trinitatem non credant &c. At illi, (Sociniani scil.) respondent ac testantur se in Patrem, Filium ac Spiritum Sanctum ex animo credere, in eorumque Trinitate unitatem agnoscere. Se Jesum Christum pro Filio Dei, veroque Deo habere & ad- rare, Id p. 464. loc. prius cit. De Sacrosancta Trinitate illud unum attexo: illam me prout est in sacris literis ac symbolo, quod Apostolicum vocant, prodita, libenter agnoscere & religiose venerari. Immo nec eandem certa ratione Divinitatem in Patre, Filio & Spiritu Sancto me negare, modo origo ejus agnoscat Pater, cui & Filius & Spiritus Sanctus quicquid sunt, debent. Idem Epist. 68. p. 275. Quoties professus sum me Divi- nam in Christo naturam demisso pectore venerari, nec minus verum illius meritum ac satisfactionem nostri causa præstitam agnoscere, quamvis hæ voces in Scriptura non extent. Dicant illi, si sciunt, quis illorum un- quam audiverit, me Sancti Spiritus Hypostasim negare? Id. Epist. 16. pag. 107.

make *truth* and *falsehood* to meet together, *faith* and *infidelity* to kiss each other.

I shall not trouble the Reader with more particulars at present, what hath been said is sufficient to shew the unspeakable mischiefs that may happen to Religion, by this method of perverting the Scriptures to what sense we please by *figurative* Interpretations. But against all this I know it will be objected, what! do you not allow that there are *Figures* in the holy Scriptures, and that many places cannot possibly be understood or explain'd but by the help of them? I Answ. This we are so far from disowning, that we readily acknowledge that all the *Figures* made use of by *Rhetoricians*, may somewhere or other be found in the *Bible*. The *Poetical* and *Prophetick* parts of which, are, according to the nature of those writings, in great measure made up of them; many of which are *bold and lofty*, and not *usually* to be found in composures of other sorts. Besides, *common* and *ordinary Figures* are to be found dispersed throughout the whole Scriptures, there being no language nor writing either sacred or profane, but what makes use of them. So that common sense and reason and the practice of mankind will direct us to allow of them in some cases: but neither Reason, nor Religion, nor common Honesty will permit us to make use of them *arbitrarily* and at pleasure, in order to overthrow any truth which we do not like.

But perhaps you'll say, can you give us any rules whereby we may be able to judge of and distinguish between what is deliver'd *properly* in the Scriptures, and what *figuratively*, that so we may be able to govern our selves accordingly in our Expositions of them. To which I Ans. 1st. And our Adversaries have been told so a hundred times, that whenever we meet with any passages of Scripture, which, according to the letter, seem to contain a *plain contradiction* to the nature of things; or to be repugnant to the judgment of *sense*, or lastly which are opposite to the *nature* and *Infinite perfections* of Almighty God, as when he is represented with *corporeal parts* or *human passions*; in all these cases the Scriptures must

must be construed in a *figurative sense*, and not according to *bare words* or *letter*. And this is that which every body knows, and is readily acknowledged by us: and no man of the slowest understanding, by the advantage of a common education in the Christian Church, can be lead into mistakes by these *figurative* ways of speech; which are as well known and as easily understood as are the plainest expressions.

In other cases which are not so obvious, the *second Rule* by which we ought to govern our selves in the exposition of Scripture is, as I have formerly observed; by considering the *force and import of the words*, together with the *context*; the *scope* of the writer; the *relation* which they may have to any of the words that go before, or come after: as also to *compare* them with other parallel passages which help to illustrate one another. By these methods we may easily be lead into the true sense of the Scriptures, and be enabled to judge whether they are to be construed in a *Figurative* sense or not: I mean in all matters of Importance; and if in other *obscurer* places of *less consequence*, after due care and study to be rightly inform'd, we happen to be mistaken; such mistakes may be tolerated among Christians, without breach of *charity* or injury to the common faith.

I should mention another thing to which in our Interpretations of Scripture we ought to have a principal regard; and that is the *Analogy of faith*, and those great doctrines of our Religion plainly revealed, and therefore constantly embraced by all Churches ever since the first planting of Christianity in the world; which ought to be a just *Boundary* to our Expositions. For as no words of Scripture are to be construed in such a sense as is repugnant to the *nature and perfections of God*, which are the Foundation of *Natural Religion*: so neither are they to be allowed in a meaning which may overthrow the *Oeconomy of man's Salvation*, and the Redemption purchased for us by our blessed Saviour; which requires the belief of his *Divinity, Incarnation* and *Satisfaction*: by these our Expositions are to be regulated so far as to be consistent with them; and if not, they are to be looked upon not only

as false, but rejected as pernicious, which overturn the *Foundations* of the Christian Religion, and the Christian Church which is built upon it.

I know our adversaries have no regard for this method, but on the other hand entertain the mention of it with the utmost scorn and contempt; and therefore I did not join it with the other rules before-mentioned, which are so just and reasonable, that they dare not refuse them; and by the help of them alone we may be enabled to find the true meaning of the Scriptures, *viz.* whether they are to be construed *literally* or *figuratively*. But when none of those Conditions require us to recede from the *literal Exposition*, but plainly direct to it, then we cannot introduce *common* and much less *unusual Figures* without being guilty of the greatest falshood and prevarication. For by the same reason and by the help of the same methods, we may pervert the sense and meaning of all expressions and all other writings whatsoever, and thereby lay the foundations of *craft* and *deceit*, as I have before observed, and destroy all confidence in *commerce* and *conversation*; it being impossible for one man to understand the meaning of another, if we may thus pervert his words; none of which, tho' utter'd never so plainly, but may be construed to a different sense.

For which reason every body ought to discourage and oppose as far as in him lies, this pernicious practice, which may in time prove so mischievous to our *Civil Interests* as well as those of *Religion*. In this latter case we are content to allow the just and reasonable, but not an *unlimited, arbitrary* use of *Figures*; and therefore shall conclude this point with the direction of ' *St. Hilary*, which is to this purpose, "That every honest Reader should come with sincere resolutions to submit to the plain meaning of the holy writings,

¹ *Optimus Lector est qui dictorum intelligentiam expectat ex dictis potius quam imponat, & retulerit potius quam attulerit: neque cogat id videri dictis contineri, quod ante lectionem præsumserit intelligendum. Lib. 1. De Trinitate, p. 7.*

“and not impose upon them one of his own; and consequently ought to construe them, when there is occasion for it, by such Figures as he finds in the text, but not by such as he brings along with him and forces into it, against the scope of the place and the design of the sacred penmen.

The Reader by this time, having duly weighed what hath been said in the foregoing papers, I hope is sufficiently convinc'd of the unspeakable mischief that must follow from this opinion of our Adversaries, which makes *Reason* the *supreme judge* of all *revealed truths*: how derogatory is it to the Honour of our blessed Saviour and his Apostles; how repugnant to the Perfections and Authority of the holy Scriptures; Lastly, how destructive of the truth and certainty of our whole Religion both as to doctrine and practice. And yet by the artifices of our Adversaries, things have been brought to that pass, that we have seen the holy Scriptures and the holy Doctrines contain'd in them, *carry'd captive* and lead as it were *in triumph* by this impertinent, shallow thing call'd Reason; for so it may justly be accounted when put in *opposition* to Revelation.

'Tis true indeed, we are not bound to renounce our understanding or lay it aside in the Affairs of Religion, where it hath its just use under certain limitations. But much less on the other hand ought we to part with our Religion in a complement to our Reason; so highly magnified and even deified by those men, that every thing must bend and stoop to it. The *Authority* of God must truckle to their *aspiring notions*, who with a *pride equal to*, nay *exceeding* that of *Lucifer*, who was content to be *like the most High*; will be satisfied with nothing except they may be *superior*, and place themselves *higher* than He. For so in their discourses and writings we find them, as far as in them lies, *dethroning* God and placing themselves upon the *Seat of Justice*. They thrust him from the *Tribunal* to the *Bar*, where they *arraign, censure, acquit or condemn* all his *Actions, Counsels and Revelations*, as they agree or are found repugnant to their Apprehensions. Who can with any patience observe so great an *Affront and Indignity* offer'd

fer'd to his Maker? Who can see *Religion* and *Revelation* and every thing that is sacred, *bowing* and making *obeisance* to this *Idol* call'd Reason, and yet be unconcerned? Who can behold the *Ark of God*, quite contrary to what happen'd in former times, *lying prostrate* before this *Dagon*, and not be moved with a *just* and more than *ordinary* indignation? And it must move him the more, when he observes that all these mighty boasts about Reason, are supported only with confidence and clamour.

I did somewhere in these papers, formerly say, that in a *due subordination* to Revelation we allow *more* to Reason than these men do. Let me briefly shew it in some particulars.

First, we do not only *read* the Scriptures, but we *examine*, we *compare*, we *argue*, we *draw consequences* from them, which is the proper business of Reason; which will likewise tell us, that such *deductions* when rightly made, are as much Scripture as the *words* and *letter* of it. They on the other hand will oblige us to adhere to the very words and expressions, and will allow of no *inferences*, which yet no rational man can refuse, provided that they are not remote and doubtful, but plainly deduced from clear and next principles. And indeed the refusal would be of infinite ill consequence, as might easily be shewed if it were the business of this place.

'Tis true they will not abide by this rule, nor be concluded by it themselves; but very unreasonably, and indeed very impudently they would confine us to it against their own practice. I need not cite any passages out of *Schlichting*, *Osteröd*, *Crellius*, *Gittichius* for proof of this, which are so well known to all who are conversant in their writings.

Secondly, we pay a just deference to the *Authority* of God, and that *Revelation* of Himself and his will which he hath made in his Word. They on the other hand pay none, or at least such a partial, limited obedience to it, which is as bad as none: but *subject* every thing to their *own notions*, which is absurd and against natural Reason; one of the first dictates of which is, that we should submit to that *authority* which we own to be *infallible*, and that without hesitation or reserve.

What

What I beseech you, can be more *incongruous*, not now to mention the *Impiety* of it, than that any *faculty* should pretend to judge of that which is not the *proper object* of it? Suppose a man were as *quick-sighted* as an eagle, and that he had that confidence in his sight that he thought he could not only look *into*, but *quite through* a millstone; yet I would defy him with all this *acuteness* to see a *sound* or an *odour* there, and it would be infinitely ridiculous in him to attempt it. It will be equally absurd for any man, by his *reason*, to endeavour to find out or judge of those things which can only be discover'd by *revelation*; or to pretend to have a *perfect comprehension* of those things so revealed, many of which concern the *existence*, *powers* and *properties* of beings which are *infinite*, and consequently *incomprehensible*. In short, nothing can be more repugnant to all *order*, *decency* and the *nature* of things, than that we should not submit to that *Authority* which is *supreme*; or that we should *doubt* of, and much more *deny* his sayings whom we acknowledge to be both *true* and *infallible*; or lastly, that we by that shallow, imperfect understanding of ours should think to *scan*, *measure*, *examine* and pass a *final judgment* of the nature and perfections of what is *infinite*, *boundless* and *unlimited*, and which can no more be enclosed in the narrow limits of our reason, than the waters of the ocean can be lodged in a nutshell.

Thirdly, to construe things *figuratively* which should be taken in a *proper sense*; and to interpret those expressions *literally* which require *figures* to explain them, is against all reason. And yet these blunders our Adversaries are perpetually guilty of. When the *name*, *properties*, *operations* of the Godhead are ascribed to our Saviour, to avoid the confession of his Divine nature, they will expound these by *figures*. When the *passions* and *infirmities* of men, such as *grief*, *anger*, *repentance* &c. are ascribed to God, which require a *figurative* and *metaphorical construction*; here they adhere to the *words* and *letter*.

Now such interpretations argue want of *judgment*, as being *irrational*; tho' in most cases it is to be feared there is really

a much greater want of *honesty* in our Adversaries, who make use of them to serve very evil purposes. But from what cause soever it proceeds, 'tis certain this method is very *absurd*. For hereby we shall destroy the whole use of reason, which is to inform us of the truth and certainty of things. But by the *arbitrary* use of figures we destroy all certainty; so that we shall not know *what* is *what*. By a *trope* you may turn white into black, consecrate crimes, and convert Saints into Sinners. By the same means you may confound good and bad, just and unjust, alter truth into falsehood, and reconcile the greatest contradictions.

Fourthly, tho' our Adversaries refuse the Articles of our Religion upon pretence of their *opposition* to reason, yet at the same time they obtrude other doctrines of their own upon us which are *more* plainly *repugnant* to it. But tho' the opposition were but *equal* in both cases, yet the *disadvantage* would lie remarkably on their side, and that in these two things. First, in that they obtrude upon us notions that are not only *above*, but plainly *contrary* to reason, and in those instances of which reason is a *proper judge*. We cannot comprehend what is *infinite*, such as is the *nature* of God, his *properties*, the *way* and *manner* of his subsistence, which is vastly different from what we observe in created Beings; there being no *proportion* between our *faculties* and those *objects* proposed to them, and therefore it is no wonder that our speculations are perplexed and puzzled about them. We are so in considering many of the powers and operations of created Beings, but however the distance is not so great but that a *finite* understanding *may* grasp and perfectly comprehend them, tho' at present we do not. But however many things come within our reach, of which we are perfect judges. So that if any person should offer a thing to our belief, which we find is repugnant to, and destructive of the nature of such things, we may and ought in such cases to reject it.

Thus for instance, if a *Papist* should tell me, as they do in their famous doctrine of *transubstantiation*, that a Body may be

be *whole* and *entire* in one place, and yet be in ten thousand others at the *same time*; I should tell him that this is both false and impossible, and therefore not fit to be believed. And yet a *Socinian* who shall reject and explode this doctrine with the utmost scorn because of it's absurdity, shall affirm and require of you to believe another doctrine no less difficult to be conceived; and that is, that a *finite Soul*, such as that of our Saviour, is capable, and actually possess'd of the *infinite perfections* of wisdom and power; which at first view appears as impossible as that a *finite Body* should have an unlimited or *infinite presence*.

This hath been the constant practice of *Hereticks* and *Atheists*, and all sorts of *Enemies* of revealed Religion, who when they have argued or rallied people out of the *Mysteries* of their *old Religion*, never fail to substitute *new ones* of their own in their room. The men of reason, as they would be accounted, cannot comprehend the *Eternal Duration* and *Infinite presence* of God, and therefore deny his *Existence*. But the followers of *Epicurus* can allow of an *Infinite space* in which his *Atoms* range: and the whole herd of *Atheists* unanimously contend for the *Eternity* of the World, and an *infinite* succession of Ages and Events that have happen'd in them, which is one of the greatest contradictions that can be offer'd to a man's understanding.

The *Gnosticks* and *Manichees*, according to the example of the *Pagans* their Fore-fathers in infidelity, still upbraided the Orthodox with their *Faith*: that all their Religion consisted in *believing*: whilst they in the mean time boasted of their *Knowledge*,

I Profitentur hoc omnes hæretici, & eis quos illectant, rationem se de rebus obscurissimis pollicentur reddituros: eoque Catholicam Ecclesiam criminantur, quod illis qui ad eam veniunt præcipitur ut credant: se autem non jugum credendi imponere, sed docendi fontem aperire gloriantur. Sed non ita est. Hoc enim faciunt nullo robore præditi, sed ut aliquam concilient multitudinem nomine rationis. Aug. de utilitate credendi. cap. 9. Nosti enim, Honorate, non aliam ob causam nos in tales homines incidisse,

Knowledge, and would have the World to believe that they were *too wise* and *too wary* to be imposed upon without good reason. But when you come to consider the doctrines which they taught and laid so great a stress upon, you would think that they had abandon'd every thing that looked like reason; that they were govern'd only by lust and sense: and particularly in their speculations, that they gave themselves up to the conduct of a wild and roving imagination, so that no man in *Bedlam* could either conceive, or utter things more opposite to *truth* and *soberness*, than what are to be found in the writings of these men.

And as such extravagant notions were not *capable* of any *proof*, so neither did they pretend to *offer* any arguments in confirmation of them; but recommended them to their followers only upon their own *authority*, which is the *Second* disadvantage that lies on our Adversaries side. When we offer certain *Articles* to be believed by Christians, we tell them at the same time that they are *mysteries*, such as *natural reason* cannot comprehend; but withal that they come recommended to us not only by a competent, but by the greatest authority in the World, *viz.* by a *Divine Testimony*, which tho' it cannot answer all objections made to the *nature* of the things themselves, yet it should over-rule all scru-

nisi quod se dicebant, terribili autoritate separata, mira & simplici ratione eos qui se audire velent introducturos ad Deum, & errore omni liberaturos. Ibid. cap. I.

I *Ego nunc quæro unde ipse cognoverit, (ea scil. quæ de duobus principis commentus erat Manichæus.) Si dicit sibi à Spiritu Sancto revelatum, suamque mentem divinitus illustratam, ut ea quæ dicit certa & manifesta cognoscit; ipse significat quid intersit inter cognoscere & credere. Ipse enim cognoscat cui apertissime ista monstrantur: eis autem quibus hæc narrat, non cognitionem insinuat, sed credulitatem suadet, cui quisquis temere consenserit, Manichæus efficitur, non certa cognoscendo, sed incerta credendo. Primum pollicetur rerum certarum cognitionem, & postea incertarum imperans fidem. Cui tamen si hoc dicatur, ut saltem vel sibi hæc esse monstrata doceat, similiter deficit, & hæc quoque ut credamus jubet. Quis ferat tantam fallaciam tantamque superbiam? Idem contra epist. Manich. quam Fundam. vocant.*

ples about *believing them*: so that we have both reason and revelation to justify our Faith. But they on the other hand obtrude certain *sublime, incomprehensible fooleries* on their disciples, without offering any the least proof either from reason or authority to engage their perswasion, except it be the authority of their leaders: which they urge in an *imperious, tyrannical* manner, and will not admit of either exception or scruple to any of their impositions.

Perhaps you'll say, these things may very fitly be urged against *Valentinus his Æones*, as also against the other wild opinions of the *Marcionites* and *Manichees*; but what is this to the *Socinians* with whom our present disputes are? These are men of more sober principles, who urge nothing upon you but what is agreeable to your *Ideas*, and therefore fit for a wise man's belief. No! Pray what think you of the notion of a *finite* and a *material* God: *limited* in his presence, cloathed with *passions*, and subject to the like *frailties* and *infirmities* as we mortal men are? what think you of a *material* and a *mortal rational soul*, which dies with the body, and as truly as that doth: being, after it's separation, destitute of life, sense, motion, and all the impressions of *pain* or *pleasure*?

What just idea can you frame of a *plurality of Gods*, whereof one is a *junior, modern, inferiour, dependent* God? The *Heathens* had other notions of their *principal* Gods, whom they placed in a state of *independence* and *coordination* to each other. But that was a wrong imagination. Tho' one would think that if they were true Gods, as the *Heathens* fancied, they should be *coequal* and *coeternal*, and natural reason would plainly tell us so. But *Socinus* thinks otherwise, and therefore affirms that the fault of the *Heathens* was, not that they believed a plurality of Gods, but that they made them *coequal*, and therefore *independent* on each other.

Again, what notion have you of the *separation* of properties, and their *communication* to different subjects? which is destructive of the *idea* of a property, and with it of the natures of things which thereby must be quite altered and con-

founded. What think you of a *limited omnipresence*, a *finite omnipotence*, an *omniscience* without a *prescience*, that is, an *infinite knowledge* yet consistent with the *ignorance* of future events? Lastly, what Idea have you of *idolatry*, which is condemned by the light of nature as well as the positive precepts of revealed Religion, and yet is approved and practised by the *Socinians*? Can any thing be more repugnant to *reason* than these senseless, absurd opinions? which yet are glibly *swallowed* by them *without straining*.

Well! but tho' they cannot defend these opinions by *reason*, yet they can, it is presumed, offer some other *good proofs*, which may be sufficient to support their belief of them. I Answ. No, they cannot, as to some of their notions: and therefore offer nothing in vindication of them but their own *authority*, to which every thing must submit: for when the great *Socinus* speaks, then the whole world must *keep silence*, and receive his dictates without either exception or enquiry.

As for *others* indeed, especially those which concern the *perfections* and *worship* of our Saviour, they appeal to a '*Divine Testimony* contained in the Scriptures. How! *A Divine Testimony* do you say? must this be allowed in opposition to *reason*? Yes, yes in some cases it ought to be admitted; for you must know that this reason, which you so much talk of,

1 This is that *opus admirandum* which God foretold he would do, and at the same time foresaw that evil-minded men who are governed by their own reason would not believe, because they were not possessed of just notions of God's power and goodness to mankind, *sed qui recte de Deo sentiunt, id credunt & exclamant, à Domino factum est illud, & mirabile est in oculis nostris.* Socin. contra Volan. p. 411. So *Smalcus* tells us that it is *Augustissimum Religionis Christianæ Mysterium, quod rationem omnem excedere videtur*; and yet for all this, is to be believed; because without this supreme power lodged in Christ, we could not place an entire confidence in him, nor expect eternal life from him, whereas the Scriptures *copiose testantur salutem nostram in manu Christi positam esse.* So that *Scriptures* it seems must over-rule *reason*. Smalc. Exam. Centum Err. p. 15.

is a very ¹ foolish and a fallible business, and is no judge of these matters, and therefore you must bring your opinions to the *Scriptures* as the only *certain* and *stable principles* by which they can be tryed and confirmed. This seems a very surprising account, considering the men who give it. But will they abide by it themselves in those other doctrines which are in dispute between them and us? No, by no means, you cannot think them so foolish and inconsiderate. When *Socinus* prescribes such methods, he is too wise not to except himself. *Aliis, non sibi legem istam tulit*: you ought to be tied up to the use of these rules, but he never designed thereby to abridge *himself* of his *own liberty*. This direction then, when it is for his purpose must take place, but when it is for yours it may be rejected.

Thus when you assert the *Eternal Divinity, Incarnation* and *Satisfaction* of our Saviour, these are not to be admitted, tho' you produce the words of Scripture in proof of your assertion. For tho' it should affirm these things a *hundred times* and that *clarissimis verbis*, in the clearest expressions imaginable, they would not believe them, because they are *re-*

1. When *Christian Franken* in the Disputation about the Invocation of Christ proposed to manage it by reason, *disputabo tecum ratione si placet*. Socin. answ. *non placet*. He will appeal to the testimonies of Scripture, *ad quæ tanquam ad certa quædam principia omnis disputatio tandem redigitur*. But as for reason if you consider that, you will find *paucissima omnino sunt principia certa*, the principles of that are very uncertain, and so remote from these Theological matters, such as the invocation and worship of Christ, that you can make little or nothing out by it, p. 767. So again, when *Franken* urged, that if Christ were possessed of infinite knowledge, *quilibet ratione præditus*, natural reason would teach a man to conclude that therefore he must be God; *Socinus* replies, *Philosophica sunt ista, & Christi doctrinæ inimica*, p. 771. Once more: when in pursuit of this matter he farther tells *Socinus*, that it would not be possible to answer the Arguments of the Trinitarians for the *Divine Nature* of Christ, if he were allowed to have a *Divine Power*, and a title thereby to a *Divine Worship*, because there is a necessary connexion between these: *Socinus* answers, *decipiuntur isti ratione subvertentes Theologiam*, p. 773.

pugnant

pugnant to reason; and what is so, *Confestim explodendum est*, is to be exploded without any more ado, & *ad Scripturæ Tribunal ne admittendum quidem*, and not to be allow'd to appeal to Scripture, as we heard before from *Schlicht*. On the other hand, when they assert the *facilitious, temporal Divinity* and *Worship* of our Saviour, who according to them is but a *Creature*, tho' these are repugnant to the notions of a *Divine Nature* and a *Divine Worship*, yet they require they should be admitted because *revealed* in the Scriptures. But if still you press them with their own argument, and say that an *opposition* to reason, notwithstanding the *Authority of Scripture*, may be offer'd in bar of *their opinions* as well as our *Articles*, they have nothing to reply, but fall out into loud and *Tragical Exclamations*; what! *will you not worship Christ, will you not acknowledge him to be your Lord God*: will you contradict the Scriptures which affirm and require this? you shew your selves hereby unworthy of the name, and therefore deserve to be driven from the society of all good Christians.

Thus we see how it is with these men: they dispute the *Authority of God*, and in the mean time require an absolute submission to *their own*. If they require you to *believe*, you must do it without *proof* and without *hesitation*. Their *naked words* are *arguments*, their *saying* is *proving*, their *confidence* is *demonstration*. They will not allow you to *doubt of*, much less to *oppose* their dictates: if you do, you must expect to be loaded with ill names, and reproached with all the scurrility and ill language which malice in conjunction with hypocrisy can invent.

The summ of what hath been said is this: That none are more forward to impose things *incredible* on the faith of their disciples than those who declaim against *credulity*: and none are more destitute of *good proof* for what they affirm than those who exact of others nothing less than *reason and demonstration*. The *Gnosticks* of old how much soever they despised

¹ *Si bona fide quæras, concreto vultu, suspensio supercilio, Altum est: aiunt. Ne discipulis quidem propriis ante committunt, quam suos fecerint.*

despised the *Credulity* of Christians, yet with an unpardonable impudence required an *implicite faith* of their own followers. And the disciples of ¹ *Marcion*, particularly ² *Apelles*, was so far from proving his own doctrine from reason, that he declared *faith was not to be enquired into, but men were to acquiesce without disputing.*

Now since, as far as I can find, it is agreed on by all hands, that we must have *Articles* and *Doctrines* offer'd to our belief; and that there must be an *Authority* lodged somewhere to which we must submit in the Affairs of Religion; I think it is highly reasonable that we should declare against all changes and alterations; let us enjoy our *old Creeds* and our *old Leaders* and Governours, I mean the *Apostles* of Christ, the Ancient *Christian Doctors* of the Church, who received their Faith and Religion from them. For if once you can be prevail'd upon by the pretences of *Reason and Moderation* &c. to part with your old Masters, you must submit to incomparably a greater Tyranny under your new ones. The former require Faith to their message and ministry, but they do it with good reason, shewing their *Credentials* from Heaven, which are sufficient to determine every man's obedience: But these have no such *vouchers*, and yet require an entire and absolute submission. It faring with these *Innovators* in Religion, as it doth with those other persons who design Alterations in the State; who pretend *Law* and *Liberty* and *Redress of grievances*, and yet when possessed of the power they aimed at, they are observed to exercise it in a more imperious, arbitrary manner than those against whom so great complaints, upon the account of the ill use of their authority, were raised. But this cheat tho' a hundred times

rint. *Habent artificium quo prius persuadeant quam edocuant.* Tertull. adversus Valent. cap. 1.

¹ Δύο ἄρχαίς ἀπεφάνησαν: but as *Rhodon* who confuted them, tells us, they affirmed this ψιλῶς καὶ ἀναποδείκτως. vid. *Euseb. hist. Eccl. lib. 5. cap. 13.*

² Πολλὰ μὲν ἡλικίᾳς λέγων ἠλέγχθη· ὁ δὲ καὶ ἔρασκε μὴ δεῖν ὅλως ἐξετάζειν τὸν λόγον, ἀλλ' ἔκλεσον ὡς πεπίστευκε ἀλαμύρειν. Idem Ibidem.

discover'd yet as often prevails. Men will be gulled out of their liberty by the promises of *freedom*; and out of their Religion by the pretences to *reason*, *piety* and *reformation*.

St. *Austin* of old was deceived by this artifice of the *Manichees*, viz. by their vain boasts of *Reason*, and the *Calumnies* which they rais'd against the *Orthodox* as if they were *Enemies* to it. Tho' the claim that they made to it, if you compare the doctrines which they rejected with these new ones which they impos'd on the world in their room, was so superlatively impudent, that one would wonder how any could possibly be seduced by it.

This serves to shew the mighty force and power that is in *confidence*, tho' it stands singly by it self without any other good *proof* to support it. It shall go as far, in governing the persuasions of men, as *reason* and *argument* and *authority* all put together. Nay, at *some times* and with *some men* it shall prevail against all these, and over-rule *sense* and *experience* into the bargain. It shall bear down all other conviction, and *captivate* men into the belief of things tho' never so absurd, almost whether they will or no. There is a certain sort of *fascination* in it; it bewitches or bewilders men to that degree, that they shall reject such doctrines which, upon the justest grounds of belief, they had embraced, and admit others in their room, which their reason, if they would make free use of it, cannot but condemn.

This is the Case between us and the *Adversaries* of our holy Religion. They upbraid us with a *naked faith*, which they stile an *irrational* and *brutish assent*. They charge us with being *Enemies to reason*, which they upon all occasions commend, magnify and make the highest pretences to. This so

I *Quid enim aliud me cogebat, annos fere novem. sprete religione quæ mihi puerulo à parentibus insita erat, homines illos sequi & diligenter audire, nisi quod nos superstitione terreri & fidem nobis ante rationem imperari dicerent: se autem nullum premere ad fidem nisi discussa & enodata veritate: Quis non his pollicitationibus alliceretur?* August. de utilitate credendi, cap. 1. vide eundem contra Faustum Manich. cap. 16. & 18.

far prevails upon many, that they *surrender* up their professions to the *confidence* of these men, and are lead by them into the belief of the greatest absurdities, without examination and without scruple.

By all that hath been said it appears that our Adversaries have as little regard for *Reason* as they have for *Revelation*; tho' the former be that great Engine which they make use of to overturn the latter; and with it the truth and authority of the holy Scriptures, in which it is contain'd. And yet at the same time pretend a mighty *reverence* for those holy writings, which is none of the least instances of their *confidence*, and by which they have beguiled too many, who upon that very score have been lead into a good opinion of them.

But can any man believe that they are in *good earnest* when they make these professions? For is it to be imagined that they should own the *truth*, and which is much more, the *inspiration* of those writings, which, when we come to debate matters with them, they will not be *concluded by*? As it is plain they will not, but *appeal* to Reason, against the plain, positive, reiterated declarations which are to be found there.

To say in excuse for the Socinians, that they do own the words of Scripture, but not according to the obvious and generally received *meaning*, will not mend the matter. For this only serves to discover their *perfidiousness and treachery*, in that they make use of this *insidious*, but in all regards as effectual a way of undermining their Authority, as if they had plainly *disorned* it. For who can have any reverence for such writings, which according to the *expression and phrase*, seem calculated on purpose to *amuse and deceive* the Reader? It would be a much *honester* way to lay aside the *present* Scripture, and to give us a *new* and a *naked Gospel* strip'd of all those lofty and figurative expressions, especially those apply'd to our blessed Saviour, which are *apt* to lead, and have *actually* lead millions into such desperate mistakes; and penn'd in other words more *conformable* to the *true sense*, which

which, if our Adversaries are to be credited, is so *remote*, and indeed so *directly opposite*, in many points of high importance, to the *present phraseology*.

But matters are not come to that pass, as yet, to encourage them in any such attempt. God knows what they might do if hereafter they should gain strength and numbers sufficient. At present it is their interest to own the holy Scriptures, tho' they give us too many reasons to *suspect* that they inwardly despise and undervalue them. Nay they have given us more than a *bare suspicion*; for when *urged* with the words of Scripture, and sometimes of their *own accord* without any such provocation, they have let fall such expressions, as are directly levell'd against their authority, and particularly against that of the *old Testament*, and consequently of the *new*; which are placed upon the same level, and must therefore stand or fall together.

To give some instances. Is it to be imagin'd that those men can believe *Moses* to have acted the part of a *true*, and which is much more, of an *inspired Historian*, who tell us that the History which he gives of the Creation of the World, of the Origin and Degeneracy of Mankind, if we consider the words and the *literal meaning* of them, in which they have been for many Ages generally understood both by *Jews* and *Christians*; contains an *absurd, senseless, ridiculous Account*, repugnant to reason, opposite to piety, dishonourable to God and his infinite perfections? which are the reasons that they urge against it, and the *motives*, as they tell us plainly and boldly, which induced them not only to *reject*, but to expose and *ridicule* it. I do not know that the *Socinians*, I mean those that profess themselves such, have done this; but some others have, influenced by this pernicious *maxim*, viz. that *reason is to be the rule of their faith, and the supreme judge of revealed Religion*.

Again, *Moses* in his writings assures us that that Body of Laws which we find there prescribed to the *Jews*, he received from the *Mouth of God himself*, not only the *Moral*, but the *Ritual* likewise and *Judicial* branches of it. But can any
man

man possibly imagine that ¹ Socinus believed this to be true, who passes this censure upon them; that, for the greatest part of them, they are *vain, trifling, superstitious, foolish, ridiculous precepts*, and in short, *parum Deo digna*; unworthy of God; not becoming him to *prescribe*, nor consequently fit for any reasonable man to *obey*?

I doubt not but that the pious Reader, who hath never perused any such detestable passage, will be *astonished* if not *affrighted* at the reading of it. *Vox non hominem sonat*. Sure this must be a sound that did not proceed from the *mouth of a man*, but broke out of the *infernal regions*: the least that can be thought is, that the Devil, that *infernal spirit*, did direct the tongue and pen of him that uttered it.

Moses to encourage the children of Israel to yield obedience to these laws tells them, that God had ² *distinguished* them from all other nations by the *righteous laws* which he gave them: that it would be for their *interest* and *reputation* to obey them; because this obedience would not only entitle them to the *favour* of God, but likewise to the *good opinion* and *esteem* of the nations round about them, who when they should hear of these *Statutes*, should proclaim the happiness and wisdom of this people, and should say, *surely this nation is a wise and understanding people*. But if Socinus be to be credited, they must be reputed one of the most wretched and

¹ *Præcepta veteris fœderis maxima ex parte ejusmodi sunt, ut difficile sit creditu ea à Deo manare, adeo vel levia, vel vana, vel superstitiosa, vel etiam stulta & ridicula, & in summa, parum Deo digna videri queant. Ita ut necesse fuerit ut longo temporis tractu Deus nunciorum cœlestium apparitionibus, miraculisque evidentibus fidem faceret, legem illam à se promulgatam fuisse.* Socin. Epist. Andreæ Dudithio, p. 499.

² *Deut. chap. 4. v. 7, 8.* For what nation is there so great who hath God so nigh unto them: And what nation is there so great that hath Statutes and Judgments so righteous, as all this Law which I set before you this day? *Ver. 6.* Keep therefore and do them, for this is your wisdom and understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these Statutes and say, *Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.*

miserable of all people, to be tied up so strictly and under such high penalties to yield obedience to such *foolish, senseless, ridiculous, superstitious usages*, as must justly expose them to the reproach and scorn of their neighbours round about. From which different accounts it must unavoidably follow, that either *Moses* or *Socinus* was a notorious Impostor.

'Tis true, many of these Laws and Customs were *tedious*, and *chargeable* and *Burdensome*; therefore stiled a *yoke* by *St. Peter*, which could not *well be born*. But yet for all that they were excellently accommodated to the *present Circumstances* of the *Jews*, who were made choice of by God for a *peculiar people*, and for several great and weighty reasons, not necessary now to be insisted upon, to be *separated and distinguished* by their *Laws* and *Customs* from all other nations of the world. It must therefore be a detestable presumption in this man thus to arraign the Wisdom and Goodness of Almighty God, and to censure his precepts as things *unworthy* and *unbecoming* Him.

But is it to be imagined that these should have God for their *Authour*? *Socinus* himself tells us, *difficile est creditu ea à Deo manare*: It is hard to imagine that such *absurd, ridiculous, superstitious* Laws should be enacted and proceed from God. But what should induce *Socinus* or any man else who hath the same notions of these Laws, to believe that God could be the *Authour* of them? Here be a great many things that might justly favour our *incredulity*; but he assigns one reason as sufficient to over-rule them all; and that is taken from the many *signs, appearances* and *voices from heaven*, together with other *mighty miracles* which God was fain to work in confirmation of them; otherwise it were not possible for any to believe they came from God.

Now this *reason* when we consider it, is as directly level'd against the Wisdom and Goodness of God, as the *character* which he before gave of his Laws. For is it possible that he who is a God of *Order* and *Wisdom* and *Decency* and *Holiness*, should not only *prescribe*, but likewise make use of his *Almighty Power* to confirm men in the belief, and engage them

them in the practice of what is *foolish, absurd, impious, superstitious*, unbecoming the *Authority* and *Compliance* of God and man? Is not this to set his *Seal to a lye*, viz. that he is the God of folly and superstition? Is not this an effectual course to disparage *Miracles* to that degree, as to render them *useless* and *contemptible*?

We use to say, and that with great reason, that the *Doctrine* and the *Miracle* are mutual supports to each other. But by this account we shall be at a loss, in some cases, how to distinguish between a *Divine Power*, and a *diabolical operation*, since the former as well as the latter may be employ'd in confirmation of *folly* and *superstition*. In short the Devil is *too wise* to make use of his power against himself, that is, to support *Virtue* and *Religion*, because hereby he would be *divided*, which would end in the *ruin of his Kingdom*. Much less can we think that God would exercise his Almighty Power to establish what is *foolish, ridiculous* and *unbecoming* his *Divine Wisdom* and *Goodness*, (to which such *prescriptions* are so directly opposite) and thereby expose his *Authority* and weaken his *Government* in the *World*.

What hath been hitherto cited out of *Socinus* and his followers concerns the Writings of *Moses only*. And it is as certain that they have as little reverence for *any other* of the *Prophets*. When *Meidixibovius* had cited a testimony out of one of the *Prophets*, *Theoph. Nicolaides* (that is *Smalcus* under that feigned name) who undertook the defence of *Socinus* against him, replies, *recipitur hoc Testimonium, sed plus valisset si dixisset Apostolus*: We allow of this passage, but it had been of *greater* force if it had been deliver'd by an *Apostle*. But why so I beseech you! for if they were both *inspired*, they must be both *infallible*, and consequently the *Authority* in both cases must be *equal*.

This destroys the *Inspiration* of the *Prophets*. But however it supposes *truth* tho' not *infallibility*. *Smalcus* therefore in other places shall express himself more fully. *Parum re-*

fert quid propheta dicat de cultu Dei. And why may he not as well say, *parum refert quid propheta dicat de homicidio, furto vel adulterio, &c.* for the worship to which Smalcus hath respect in that reflection, was the worship of God established in the First Commandment, which he appropriates to himself, and which he had often declared that he would not part with to another, which certainly is a moral duty of indispensable obligation, if any thing contained in the two Tables may be judged such. And therefore if the prophets are not to be revered in what they say upon this subject, there is no great regard to be had to any thing else that they say.

But what Smalcus affirms, he endeavours to prove; which proof of his will be a farther evidence, how meanly and irreverently he thought of the Prophets. The Apostles, saith he, came after the Prophets, and so were best able to interpret their meaning. This is certain; but what then? Why then it follows from hence, that if the Prophets should deliver any thing in their writings which may not only seem, but really be different from what is delivered by Christ and his Apostles; then in this case you ought to reject the former and submit to the latter. And this is, saith he, *parum curare quid Propheta dicat.* So in another place to the same purpose he tells us, that the sayings of the Prophets² are to be explain'd by those of the Apostles: that's true again; but then follows, if there be any contrariety between them, then the former are to be amended and corrected by the latter. Now this imports more than explanation sure. The one may imply obscurity; the other, viz. correction supposes error and

¹ Si constet Christum & Apostolos perfectiores esse Magistros Prophetis, quis non videt etiamsi interdum diversum quid dicere videantur, vel etiam Reipsa dicunt prophetae ab iis quae Christus dixit & Apostoli, non Istud sed Hoc sequendum esse? quod est parum curare quid prophetae dicant de illa re. Exam. Cent. Err. p. 9. Si aliqua inter haec, quae Evangelium & lex continet, repugnantia esse videatur, semper sit sequenda auctoritas novi potius foederis, quam veteris. Idem Refut. Nov. Monstr. p. 84.

² Notandum est verba prophetarum explicanda esse secundum verba Apostolorum; adeo ut si quid discrepent, verba prophetarum corrigenda sunt potius ex verbis Apostolorum. Ibid. p. 25.

mistake, which is opposite to *truth*, but at a much greater distance from *Inſpiration*. And therefore where there is not only a *ſeeming* but a *real* difference between theſe writers, *faults* and *errors* ſuppoſed to be in one, which are to be *reformed* and *corrected* by the other; 'tis a ſign the former *ſpoke of themſelves*, that is, what their own private fancy or reaſon ſuggeſted to them, but were not *moved by the Holy Ghoſt*; otherwiſe theſe errors muſt be aſcribed to his *direction*, which would be downright blaſphemy.

Nor indeed, upon this ſuppoſition, could the *latter*, viz. the Apoſtles of Chriſt, pretend to this *Inſpiration*, however their *perfection* and *correctneſs* be ſo much magnified above the Prophets. For they bear witneſs to the truth and ¹ *Inſpiration* of *Moſes* and the *Prophets*: they ² *appeal* to their *teſtimony* as that which was ſupernatural and of greater authority than a *voice from Heaven*: they recommend their writings to the peruſal of all perſons, as ſuch which are uſeful ³ to attain all the great ends of Piety and Religion, that is, *which are able to make men wiſe unto ſalvation*, and direct them in the way to eternal life. A great many more paſſages might be cited to this purpoſe; but theſe few are ſufficient to ſhew what opinion our bleſſed Saviour and his Apoſtles had of *theſe writings*, which is every way agreeable to the account which St. Peter gives of them, 2 Pet. ch. i. v. 21. viz. *That the Propheſy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men ſpoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt*.

Now it is certain if this account of the Apoſtles be true, then *Smalcus* his reflections on the Prophets is injurious and falſe. On the other hand if *Smalc.* be in the right, who tells us that the Prophets were *imperfect writers*, liable to *error* and *mistake*, and therefore to be *corrected* by the Apoſtles, and ſometimes *rejeſted* when they deliver'd things *contrary* to what the latter affirmed, then 'tis as certain that our Saviour and his Apoſtles were in the wrong in the account which

¹ 1 Pet. i. 11. ² John 5. v. 39, 46, 47. 2 Pet. i. v. 18, 19. ³ 2 Tim. 3. v. 15, 16, 17.

they give of their *excellence, usefulness and inspiration*. The consequence of which must be, that being both the one and the other liable to *errors*, their *Divine Authority* is on all hands to be rejected: *Parum refert quid Prophetæ sub veteri*, and for the same reason, *parum quid Apostoli sub novo fœdere dixerunt*; they all utter'd their *own* dictates and opinions, and therefore might be *deceived*; but were not governed by the *guidance* of the *Holy Spirit* (as *St. Peter* affirms) who we are sure could not be so. Thus we see what a blessed work these men are engaged in, who by setting the Prophets and Apostles together *at variance*, expose them to the contempt and laughter of *Atheistical* by-standers, who must be infinitely pleased to see them *clash and contend, chastise and censure* one another. This effectually undermines the Authority of both, and thereby vindicates the reputation of *Scepticks, Libertines and Deists* in their opposition to all *revealed Religion*. The destruction of *which* seems to have been the *design* of *Socinus* and his followers, or at least is the *consequence* of those impious opinions which they have published, and with great zeal endeavour'd to propagate in the World. And this, when I first set upon this work, I undertook to shew; and what I then promised I hope I have in some measure perform'd. I am sure what hath been said is no more than what was highly necessary, tho' a great deal remains yet unsaid, which must be left to some other abler hands, who have leisure and inclinations for such an undertaking.

THE CONCLUSION.

The Reader upon a *due reflection* upon what hath been said, and indeed I think I may venture to say, that without much niceness of thought, even at *first view*; may easily discern the *impiety and danger* of these opinions of *Socinus* which are in these Papers truly represented; and the *bare representation* will be sufficient to raise a just *indignation*, or if you please *horror*, in the minds of every sincere Christian, who hath a hearty

heartly belief of, and love for the Religion which he professes.

At the same time it cannot but afford matter of wonder to observe that any should be found, among them who pretend to *believe* the great doctrines of Christianity, and much more among them who by their *character* and *station* are obliged to *maintain* and *defend* them; who can *tamely* and without any shew of *resentment*, see them not only *deny'd* and *opposed*, but *contemned* likewise and *ridiculed*; and the contrary opinions, so dishonourable to God, so false in themselves, so pernicious in their consequences, so destructive to our whole Religion both as to faith and practise; published and propagated with no small *care* and *industry*, maintain'd with *heat* and *passion*, mingled with *scandalous reflections* upon our holy Religion, and upon all the great and good men that have been concern'd in the vindication of it. These are things that have shocked many by-standers, who were infinitely offended, and as they conceive, very justly too, with this strange, unaccountable tameness, which might look like *stupidity* if there were nothing worse at the bottom of it, however palliated with the specious pretences to *peace* and *moderation*.

Neither is this reflection the effect of malice and uncharitableness. For *Charity* which *believes all things*, will teach us to put the best construction upon things as far as they are capable of it: yet it can never dispose men to believe things that are *absolutely inconsistent*; such as are a *firm persuasion* that a doctrine is both true and of great importance; and yet an *indifference* in the profession and a *coldness* in the defence of it. The world will judge of things by *appearances*, and sometimes God knows is apt to entertain unreasonable suspicions without them. But when men give too just and plain grounds, then such censures cannot afford matter of wonder or complaint.

In other cases we proceed by these measures. Should a man make profession of great friendship to me, and yet when he saw me assaulted in my person, injur'd in my estate, af-

fronted and wronged in my reputation, and yet stand by as an *unconcern'd spectator*; and neither lift up his *hand* or his *tongue*, either to protect me from violence, or clear me from defamation: would not every body that observed *this* justly imagine, that That person notwithstanding his professions, or if you please, his protestations of kindness, had no real affection or esteem for me? because the former if sincere, would be absolutely inconsistent with this indifference and neglect.

We have lived to see *Religion* thus assaulted by a company of wicked men, who under the name of *Deists*, *Libertines*, *Antiscripturists*, *Unitarians*, *Socinians* &c. have enter'd into an open and bold *confederacy* against it; so that it hath been left, in a manner, in the same condition with that poor man in the *parable*, who going from *Jerusalem* to *Jericho* fell among *Thieves*, who *stript him of his raiment*, *wounded him* and left him *half dead*. Hath not our Religion, I say, been in the same condition, assaulted, wounded, maimed, stript and left naked in a manner; that is, despoil'd of those great *Articles* of our Faith; which are not only the *ornaments* of our Religion, but the *necessary* and *essential parts* of its constitution, without which it will not only be *imperfect*, but *none at all*?

I could wish, that to complete the *parallel*, it could not be objected against us, that as the *Priest* and *Levite* then, so some of the *Priests* and *Ministers* of the Lord now, seeing our Religion in this sad condition, have passed by some on *one hand*, and some on *the other*, and have neither shewed compassion nor afforded their assistance: nay on the contrary were rather offended or displeased with them that did.

Now what can be said in excuse of this *indifference*? It cannot, one would think, be owing to inconsideration and want of knowledge of the falshood, and pernicious tendency of these *Socinian* Errors. For the persons concern'd in this charge are, many of them, men of learning, judgment and consideration, and therefore one would think it were impossible but that they should be convinc'd of *that* which every body else at first view doth easily discern, viz. the *impiety* and

and *danger* of these detestable opinions. And if so, it cannot but afford new matter of wonder, what should induce men of knowledge and prudence and consideration enough in other matters; obliged by their *character*, alarmed by the *complaints* of the by-standers; to be so backward in the execution of a plain duty, the omission of which cannot be *excused* by never so commendable a zeal against *some other* impious, whether opinions or practises.

For when men are observ'd not to use their endeavours, or employ their power and interest to prevent the growth and contagion of such dangerous errors, as they themselves cannot but see are *dishonourable* to God and *destructive* of the Christian Religion; this will tempt others to think, that such persons have not that regard for the *honour* of God and the *welfare* of Religion as becomes them, let their professions and declarations be what they will to the contrary.

We ought therefore in charity to think, (tho' the persons concern'd in it perhaps may not thank us for this *Apology*) that through some great *prejudice* they do not discern the *impiety* and *danger* of these tenets, influenced by some other principles which draw a vail over their understandings, and hinder them from seeing that which all other unprejudiced persons cannot but take notice of. And those I take to be principally these two: *first* the regards which *they* and which they think all *others* ought to have for *peace* and *moderation*: and secondly, the wrong *notions* which they have entertain'd of Religion, as if it consisted only in the practice of piety and those moral duties, which are indeed *indispensably necessary*, but as they conceive the *only things* necessary to our Salvation.

These specious pretences in order to overthrow our Religion, were first advanced by *Socinus*, taken up and improv'd since by *Episcopius* and his followers, whose *Authority* more than their *arguments*, (which when they come to be examin'd are found to be very slight and superficial) hath had that mighty influence upon too many among us; so far as to prevail above reason and Scriptures and the practice of the
Ancient,

Ancient, as also of all other *Orthodox Churches* that have ever since been planted in the World.

It cannot be deny'd but that the justly detestable corruptions and practices consequent thereupon, of the *Church of Rome*, have disposed many, otherwise well-meaning persons, to entertain too favourable an opinion of these *motives* and *reasons*. For when they observed that the *Pope* and his adherents branded every thing with the name of *Heresy* that was opposite to their impious doctrines, and stiled the *Reformers Schismaticks*, who separated from their *corrupt communion*, which they could not continue in without defiling their consciences with *Idolatry* and other the grossest *superstitions*, which yet made up in a manner the whole of their Religion, to the extinction in great measure of all true piety; and withal observing the *inhumane* and *sanguinary* methods which they made use of for the *conviction* and *punishment* of those who departed from their Communion, for, *convincantur & mittebantur in ignem*: many, as it usually happens in such cases, running from one *extreme* to another, began to look upon the words *Heresy* and *Schism* to be only two *Theological Scar-crows*, fit to affright fools and children, but not wise men who know how to despise such pompous but empty accusations.

In pursuance of these notions some crafty men, who were resolved to push this matter farther, have represented all just *endeavours* to propagate and defend the great truths of our Religion by *arguments* and *authority*, to be but a transcript of *Antichristian* pride and tyranny, and that the *zeal* which hath been shewed upon this occasion is nothing but the effect of an *intemperate warmth and heat*, which will at length certainly terminate in fire and faggot. A very *artificial*, (but very *dishonest*) and which hath been found but too *successful* a way to bring into disgrace all such as are hearty lovers of their Religion, and think themselves obliged earnestly to contend

1 As the ancient French Poet *Guliel. Armoricanus* expresses it in his *Philipp. lib. 1.*

for it, to represent them as a company of *violent, passionate* men, whose great aim is to *Lord* it over the *consciences* of their Brethren, as if they design'd nothing less than to revive those methods of *persecution* which we had formerly so justly condemned in the *Church of Rome*.

A great many things might be said upon this occasion, and particularly with relation to these two popular pretences of *moderation* and *piety*, which are of late become the great supports of Infidelity; but they are too many to be crowded together in the conclusion of a *Discourse*, which hath already been drawn out into a greater length than was at first design'd. Only as to what concerns *piety*, it being the most popular pretence, which takes with many well meaning but unwary men, I shall crave leave to suggest these following things.

1st. That *some* of the duties of Christian piety cannot be perform'd as to the *substance* and *matter*, nor *any* of them as to the *manner* and *form*, which will render them acceptable to God, without the knowledge and belief of the great Mysteries of our Religion. And therefore whoever are concern'd for the former, must profess, and if they really believe what they profess, are obliged to maintain and defend those great and necessary truths against all who shall oppose them.

2^{ly}. That tho' they who deny the Mysteries of our Religion may practice many *external* moral vertues, with which *infidelity*, nay indeed downright *Atheism* may be consistent, yet there are several *inward* evil dispositions of mind which, 'tis to be feared generally accompany and too often are at the bottom of it, which are absolutely inconsistent with true piety: such as are *pride, malice, obstinacy, perverseness, hypocrisy* &c. which are in themselves damnable sins, and which put men at a greater distance from Heaven than many other grosser immoralities. Therefore they who are in good earnest and would avoid vice and practice *true piety*, must keep at a distance from these pernicious errors which are so destructive of it: the Experience of all ages assuring us that men seldom *cast away*
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the faith 'till they have made *shipwrack* of a good conscience.

From hence it must follow in the Third place that those *Infidels* who are tainted with these *evil dispositions*, cannot by any means be entituled to those high Elogies which have been so *liberally*, but so *unjustly* bestowed upon them upon the account of their pretended vertue and holiness. For things have been so represented, as if there were a kind of *opposition* between Faith and Godliness, and that the former was, as it were, *destructive* of the latter. Upon this account we find such *extravagant commendations* have been given of these *enemies* of our Religion, upon the score of their piety and probity, and so many *scandalous reflections* made upon the *orthodox professors* of it, that one would think that the Graces of God's Spirit had abandon'd the Churches of Christ, and had fled for protection to the Assemblies of these Infidels. By these means *error* gains reputation and *profelytes*; whilst many either forsake the *Faith*, or at least lay aside all care and concern about it, as a useless at least, if not a dangerous thing.

But this will appear more unreasonable if we consider in the 4th place, the mischievous tendency of many of those errors advanced by these men, which are not only destructive of *revealed*, but likewise of all *natural* Religion. Now can any man think that those are concerned for true piety, and deserve such high commendations upon that score, who undermine those very principles and motives by which it hath been preserved in the world? And those among others, are the belief of the *Immortality of the Soul*, and the Certainty of *future and eternal punishments*. Both which have been opposed by the *Socinians*, especially by *Socinus* himself and his elder followers.

To these we may add; that by their undervaluing the *Institutions* of Christ, laying aside the use and destroying the vertue and efficacy of the *Sacraments*, by denying the *Authority* of the *Church*, rejecting a standing, settled *Ministry*, and taking away all distinction between things and persons *sacred* and *profane*, without which there never was any Religion ever yet either practised or at least not long preserved in the world; they do
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not only undermine all *Christian piety*, but lay the foundations of *Atheism*, where these things, if encouraged, will naturally end.

These things I have but just *hinted*, which would well deserve to be farther *enlarged* upon. But from these *brief hints* a Reader of an ordinary apprehension may be sufficiently instructed to ask these following questions. 1st. Whether that can be accounted *true piety* which is *consistent with*, and in great measure *founded upon* such principles as tend to overthrow all Religion. The Apostle *St. Jude*, v. 20. exhorts men to *build up themselves on their holy faith*, which doth well deserve that *epithet*, as being the great promoter and indeed parent of true holiness. Our Adversaries recommend a quite contrary method; *viz.* that we should *pull down* the Faith, *demolish* the great Articles of it, which are the main Supports of Religion, and upon the ruins of these to raise I know not what sort of practical holiness, which they dignify with the name of *probity*, which yet may be consistent, as *Socinus* himself allows, with the *total ignorance* of the existence and providence of God. Now for my part I believe, that if it were left to the *choyce* of the Devil himself, he could scarce desire any other or better *foundation* for the erecting of his Kingdom.

2^{ly}, Whether it can be consistent with the true belief of Religion and a hearty regard for the practice of it, to *soften* the opinions we are speaking of, and to represent them as such *harmless, inoffensive* things, which yet really are of such pernicious consequence, as that they plainly tend to *undermine* all Religion, and would I doubt not, if they should prevail, in time banish both the *profession* and *practice* of it out of the world.

Lastly, whether these persons among us who make such extraordinary pretences to Christian *meekness* and *charity*, and are desirous to be *distinguished* from their brethren upon that very score; would not do well to consider, that the *Honour* of God, and the *Reputation* of the Church of which they are members, ought not to be infinitely dearer to them than those *empty, trifling applauses* which they court, and perhaps among

some persons purchase, by these *popular pretences* and compliances? And withall it would not be unworthy their serious thoughts to consider, whether they had not much better employ that *compassion* and *charity* for which they so much value themselves, in convincing these unhappy men of the impiety and mischief of those *wicked opinions*, and *wicked courses* which in pursuance of them they are engaged in; by shewing them how *dishonourable* they are to God, how *destructive* to all true Religion both in faith and practice, and how *dangerous* they may prove to themselves in the conclusion; rather than to sooth them up in their *Infidelity* by such *unjust* and *extravagant* commendations: those especially, I mean, which are given them for their *virtue* and *piety*, which yet neither in the judgment of God, or any *wise and good men*, can abide the tryal.

The Apostle tells us 1 Cor. 3. 13. *that every man's work shall be made manifest, and that the fire shall try it of what sort it is.* Now if the *hay and stubble* which is built upon the *foundation* shall be burnt, what must be the *fate* of those doctrines which do not only *weaken* that foundation, but *tear it up quite at the roots*. The former we see shall be *consumed* by the fire, how then can the latter, which are much fitter to perish that way, withstand the *fury* of that devouring Element.

This will inevitably be the *fate* of these *damnable errors*. I hope the *persons* may escape; but it must be with much difficulty. For if they are saved, it will be *ὡς ἀπὸ πυρὸς*, *so as by fire*, and they must be like *brands* snatch'd out of it. I think it will therefore become us all to warn them of the danger they are in, and advise them not to venture their Souls upon such a *doubtfull*, if not *desperate* issue. As to *opinions* we may speak more positively, having sufficient warrant from the plain and positive declarations of the holy Scriptures. But for *persons*, we must think and speak with more caution, their final fate and condition being a *secret* which God hath reserved to himself, who sees into the darkest corners of the Soul, views the hidden springs and causes both of our persuasions and actions: who knows what allowances are fit to be made for *ignorance* or other *invincible prejudices* (which we cannot discern)

discern) which to be sure he will accordingly make. To his *unerring judgment* therefore we must refer this matter, before whose *Tribunal* they and we shall one day stand, and by whose righteous sentence we must stand or fall. God Almighty fit us for that great *Tryal*, and if our lives be but as *commendable* as our doctrines, as they certainly will be if they are every way *conformable* to our holy Faith, then I dare pronounce our condition safe; and can venture to affirm with the *same confidence* and in the *same words* with our great Apostle, Rom. 8. 38, 39. *I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor Angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord; To whom, with the Holy Spirit, Three Persons and One God be ascrib'd all Honour and Glory now and for ever. Amen.*

THE END OF THE FOURTH PART.

